A PROPHETIC INTERPRETATION OF ECONOMIC POWERS:

A STUDY IN THEOLOGY AND CRISIS

by

Gary R. Weatherly

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This professional project, completed by

<u>Gary R. Weatherly</u> ,

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Faculty Committee

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ABSTRACT

In the marketplace of pluralistic values and competing powers and authorities beckoning for human allegiance, the major problem for Christians is to evaluate their work and leisure life as the location of the Divine-Human Encounter. The need is to perceive ones cultural and social context theologically in order to delineate and compare the competing claims to ultimacy in the vernacular language of the various communities of interpretation in which one participates.

In order to respond to the problem, this project sets forth a vernacular theology, using an economic hermeneutic, to discern the meaning of the contemporary historical crisis. This investigation proceeds by examining the religious character of Ancient Near Eastern cultures and mythologies and continues with the conflict between prophetic Yahwism and the ancient fertility cults, including a form critical study of Jeremiah 44 with theological implications and a theology of Yahweh's just world order.

Using the results from the study of the tradition juxtaposed with modern business dynamics, this inquiry shows the religious and theological character of the business community. It interprets the meaning of the economic crisis, not as one of conflicting economic powers but as a confrontation between Yahweh and the people, calling for faithful action in global solidarity with humanity.

PREFACE

This project arises out of my conviction that the church is primarily a theological community providing a biblically informed perspective to discern the meaning of contemporary personal and social events. This discernment results in a vernacular theology wrestled out of the dynamic confluence of the Hebrew-Christian tradition with the historical crisis in which the community of faith participates.

By theology I mean recognizing, identifying and exposing the powers, authorities, values and ultimate meanings, i.e., the gods of our contemporary world and society. A vernacular theologian explores and illumines the web of interaction among various competing powers and authorities, their institutional expressions and alliances, and their attempts to usurp the One Present in every event Who is liberating us to blessing in a new age.

I have used Old Testament metaphors derived from the results of Ancient Near Eastern mythology studies and their adoption or rejection by Biblical Yahwism. I have also used a form critical study of Jeremiah 44 with its theology and an economic hermeneutic to elucidate the religious character of modern business community practices and suggest a meaning of our current economic crisis in light of prophetic Yahwism. While my concerns have arisen from my participation in the Christian community and my ministry, I have limited the Old Testament perimeters of this project to a prophetic interpretation rather than a more generalized Christian interpretation. I have specifically excluded the New Testament, which is a project for future research.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to those who have assisted and enabled me in this project and in my quest. First, my thanks go to Rolf Knierim, whose wrestling with the Biblical material has inspired and quickened my excitement for Biblical Theology, and whose patient and insistant probing and insight I truly appreciate. My appreciation also goes to friend and colleague, Josh L Wilson, Jr., whose continued engagement in on-going theological dialogue has nurtured, challenged and helped to shape this project for me. A special thanks goes to Ted A. Goode, whose friendship, encouragement and presence has enabled me to pursue the project.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Glenda, whose skill in composition and nimble fingers have facilitated the production of this project. But most of all I thank her for her generous, enabling support and affection of me in my theological quest.

INTRODUCTION

Because of the age and times, many questions are being raised about the Church's mission, purpose and function. In the last few years the Church has received more press. With Pope John Paul II's trip to different parts of the world, with the electronic church becoming big business, with the public attention to fundamentalistic creationists, with churches attempting to be a political force, with the rise of cultic groups and new religions, the question of the role of the Church in a pluralistic age becomes dominant. How does the Church communicate its message in an ever-changing world? How does the Church understand God's word for these times and interpret its theology for this day?

Whenever a serious Christian engages the world in his or her daily tasks of work and leisure, the questions compound. What is one's personal ministry and purpose as a Christian? How does one communicate beliefs? How does one "witness"? What is God's word or will?

More specifically, the question is focused: What is God's will or word for my life or our life as a group? The question may be based in terms of belief, on existential conflicts, in anxiety over interpersonal relationships, out of occupational decisions, or the social-political forces of our time. The question may come in the form of an elderly lady deciding to move to a senior citizen's center, or a business man trying to decide whether to expand his business, or a mother trying to decide whether to accept her daughter

and her male "live-in" roommate. The laity will use different words and terms to ask this question. But the underlying intent is like one person, in a moment of pleading, demanding, "How can I know this (a particular course of action to be taken) is the will of God for me?" There is a need for the confidence and assurance of an ultimate purpose for his life and his actions in the world.

In a time of relative or pluralistic values, the laity searches for traditions, for norms whereby they may reinforce meaning, establish purpose and make ethical decisions. They call upon the clergy for assistance in this search, asking guidance, demanding confirmation of beliefs, and often absolutizing their immediate past to stabilize their lives and grant reassurance amidst human ambiguity.

The major problem seems to be the inability of the laity (and many clergy) to evaluate their work and leisure life as the arena of the Divine-Human Encounter and to perceive their cultural and social situation religiously (as religious), i.e., as an expression of cultural theology. That is, they are in the midst of conflicting theologies, religions, gods who battle for their allegiance and commitment and find themselves unable to compare and delineate the competing claims to ultimacy which intersect their lives.

This project arises out of the author's conviction that a sound theologically trained laity is critical for the future of the Christian community as it moves into the 21st century. It is especially urgent as different versions of Christianity are spotlighted and vie for public attention.

As the Christian engages the world, he or she finds himself or herself in the midst of a marketplace of faiths, religions and theologies which beckon for allegiance. Christians are not the only ones who have a gospel to propagate. Others have a god - an ultimate meaning, value, power or authority - with a point of view and a way of life which they wish to proclaim. Not only "cults" and new religious groups have their evangelists, but also regional life styles and philosophies, special occupational views of the world and belief systems. In a broader sense, the evangelist promotes the convictions held to be true and by which decisions and actions are shaped.

Today we find ourselves in an evangelistic marketplace of conflicting opinion. Our world is a global marketplace of faiths.[1] In the midst of all its organizational activity and social function, the central core of the Church's mission is to be a theological community addressing this global marketplace of faiths and meanings in a pluralistic age.

In the everyday activity of business, social and political life, people think in certain ways, generally from the viewpoint of their particular business or occupation. Engineers think mechanically, business persons think in terms of economics, accountants financially. People interpret the world, events, issues and problems from the perspective of a community of interpretation.[2] A community's language

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[1] Charles S. McCoy and Neely D. McCarter, _The Gospel on Campus_ (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 19-27

[2] Charles S. McCoy, _When Gods Change_ (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), pp. 92-106.

is the native tongue of that perspective. Because it is used in the everyday speech and transactions of an arena, that language becomes the vernacular for the people using it.

Christians live in many such communities of interpretation. The Christian community is itself one such community and, thus, its way of thinking is theological. The need for Christians to think theologically in the various communities of interpretation in which they live and to communicate their theology in languages appropriate to those communities is of utmost importance.

The most pressing need for the clergy today is to assist and enable members of the Christian community - the laity - to think and respond theologically in their world and in their occupations, to enable them to be lay theologians. This means learning to discern the Word and activity of God and communicate it in the vernacular of their work and leisure world.

The primary function of the clergy is to be a pastoral theologian and teacher. Unless ministers understand the meanings, values and gods by which the laity live in their daily lives, our theologizing becomes quaint conversation. Knowledge of theological, biblical, historical and pastoral disciplines is important in order for clergy to listen to what is happening in the lives of their parish and address the theological dimension which exposes the gods and authorities of our individual and corporate life, laying them over against the Word and activity of God and enabling persons to respond to that Word.

While the primary focus for the pastoral theologian is the Tradition, the focus for the lay theologian is his or her engagement with the world in the various communities of interpretation. The work and leisure world is the arena for passionate engagement with the One Who is present in the vernacular modes and expressions. It is the arena where lay theology is pounded out upon the anvil of daily decision, blood, sweat and tears. It is the arena where vernacular theology is done. In other words, the primary task in a ministry of laity (or a theology of laity) is not that of an institutional chaplain or "store clerk" for the overloaded pastor. Neither is it a glorified alter boy doing menial tasks for the "real" ministry of clergy.[3] Rather, their primary engagement is in the confronting of the gods with the Yahweh Word for today.

The partnership between pastoral theologian and lay theologian brings together two streams of Christian mission. One is the tradition of the Christian community of interpretation. The other is the market-place of interpretations of the work setting and its pragmatic issues and views. In the convergence of these two torrents, the lay theologian is quickened to perceive theology in the vernacular and the theological expressions of meanings in the occupation and leisure communities in which he or she works and plays.

The core of a vernacular theology provides a means for evaluating the ultimacies of other communities of interpretation, the

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[3]See lay training programs like The Stephens Series, Pastoral Care Team Ministries, 1920 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63130 or Robert Schuller's Ministries, Crystal Cathedral, 12141 Lewis St., Garden Grove, CA 92640.

ability to recognize the powers, authorities and structures that govern our lives, that compete for human commitment and to whom humans give their allegiance. A vernacular theology juxtaposes at least two totalities of meaning - the Tradition and contemporary socio-historical-personal events as the arena of the Divine-Human Encounter, and evaluate cultural and social phenomena, or experiences, as religious, that is, as expressions of a cultural theology.[4]

This paper will begin by highlighting the current economic crisis. Then it demonstrates how the biblical authors discerned the Word of Yahweh in the context of Ancient Near East with its gods, myths and cults. The juxtapositioning of these two totalities brings about a confluence and dynamic interplay as the biblical interpretation unfolds a meaning for this day and time.[5]

One of the meanings emerging from this study is the conflict between religion and faith. In Israelite Yahwism the prophets challenged the people when they sought to mythologize the powers of creation and make their institutions sacrosanct. The prophets called for a faith response to Yahweh. In the present day economic arena a similar conflict exists between religion and faith.

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[4]Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:59-66.

[5]Walter Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), pp. 65-68.

Chapter I

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Just before then-President-elect Jimmy Carter took office, news commentator Howard K. Smith commented that the number one problem facing the new president would be the economy. He went on to predict that, if Carter could get the economy moving again, then other problems would take care of themselves. Carter's handling of the economic problems would be the criterion by which citizens would judge him as a President. What the world needed, he felt, was a good strong American economy. That President Carter could not accomplish this was a primary reason for his defeat in the 1980 election. Today the economic situation remains a major criterion by which people judge President Reagan.

The news program expressed the historical crisis of our time and the crisis before us as a nation, which is manifested in our economic crisis. The signs of this crisis are apparent with the increasing food prices, labor costs, the skyrocketing cost of public education and services, the influence of business bribery in government, the government's bail-out of large corporations in economic crisis and the global battle for economic dominance.

How can we manage the economic forces for the benefit of global welfare? How is the process arrived at by which the material goods, needed to support life, are produced, distributed and consumed justly in a global society? This economic crisis is further expressed in the tension between the possibility of high production and the

limitations upon distribution of goods and services, in the tension

between recession and inflation - i.e., "stagflation."

Before we can make a response to our historical crisis, we

need to be clear about the meaning of the crisis as expressed in the

interrelationship of the different spheres or dimensions of society,

that is, the place of politics and government in the economic arena,

the economic within the political, the effect it has upon family and

individual lives. The primary question for us is theological: what

is the meaning of our economic crisis?

In past theology, economics has been a major metaphor for

Christians to interpret the will and providence of God. When theology

spoke of the "economy of God," it referred to the Creator's plan or

providential design or to God's intention for creation or a parti-

cular period of history. The acts and events of a period were seen

as dealt out and dispensed by God as the way God managed His creation

in a given epoch.

In more recent theology, economics has fallen more strictly

within the ethical arena, that is, within the arena of human decision,

action and morality rather than God's action. For example, for Emil

Brunner, labor or economics is one of the spheres of life, with its

divine orders, which presents itself to us first of all as a definite

way of common life, as a form of social organization; "it is our task

to discover the meaning of this existing reality, and this means, to

find the meaning of community."[1] In this sphere and its ordering, in

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[1]Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), p. 291.

accordance with which we have to act, God's will meets us.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer preferred to speak of labor or economics as a mandate of God in the world by which the world is related to Christ in concrete form. For Bonhoeffer, the word "mandate" refers to a divinely imposed task rather than to a determination of being. Mandates are imposed upon all persons by God.[2] The concept of mandate must be taken "to imply the claiming, the seizure and the formation of a definite earthly domain by the divine commandment."[3] Labor encompasses everything from agriculture and economy to science and art. "Labor (economics) which is instituted in Paradise is a participation by man in the action of creation."[4]

Michael Novak holds:

> The modern economic corporation is a fruitful locus for theological inquiry....If we are ever to have a credible theology of work, theology of the laity, and theology of the world, we will have to construct a sound fundamental theology of economics and a critical theology of democratic capitalism.[5]

For him democratic capitalism is based on the differentiation between economic, political and moral systems. This differentiation is attacked today by socialist and traditional authoritarian regimes. "Corporations must become far more intellectually aware of the maelstrom of ideas, beliefs and practices they enter."[6] In other words,

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[2]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 73-74.

[3]Bonhoeffer, p. 254.   [4]Bonhoeffer, p. 74.

[5]Michael Novak, Towards a Theology of the Corporation (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981), pp. 2,4.

[6]Novak, p. 30.

they need to be more aware of the theology and the cultic practices of other communities of interpretation. Novak calls for a Christian social theology which includes a theology of corporation and, therefore, a theology of economics to inspire Christians to work within the corporation and to provide a means by which to criticize those features that need changing.[7]

This project uses economics as the paradigm to bridge the hermeneutical gap between the biblical material and our present situation. An "economic hermeneutic" allows us to interpret aspects of the scripture as well as understand the meaning of our historical crisis and what our response - ethical action - to that meaning might be. Theologically, the question is: what is God doing? What is God's judgement in the economic crisis and what is our response to that judgement? How do we or can we in the Church interpret the economic crisis? Such a hermeneutic describes the mythology of how the Ancient Near East interpreted gods as the interaction of cosmic, political and economic forces. We then move to the Yahwistic syncretism and critique which Israel made of its neighbors, discovering an analogy of these ancient interpretations for vernacular theologians to critique modern mythologies and cultic practices in the economic area of life.

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[7]Novak, p. 54.

Chapter II

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN MYTHOLOGY AND YAHWISM

In the Ancient Near East the primary powers (gods) were institutionalized and given architectural structure in the temple. The temple integrated a civilization's world view with the powers and forces operating within it. Political, economic and defense structures (institutions) were symbolized and integrated in the temple, which became the center of power and authority for people of the ancient world.

The temple usually sat upon a sacred mountain, which was the location of a deity's presence, where he/she was thought to dwell in a special way among humanity. If the land was flat, the temple was placed upon a man-made mountain called a ziggurat, which represented, architecturally, the cosmos and world view of the day. In accordance with the cosmology of the Ancient Near East, the temple was divided into three parts corresponding to the tripartite universe. There was the anteroom, representing the waters of the nether world and containing a large water basin called the apau to symbolize it. The main room, with its altar, represented the earth, while the adyton (holy of holies), housing the image of the gods, was the expression of heaven. The temple presented an inclusive image of the totality of the universe, the universe being thought of as a gigantic world mountain stretching from the entrance of the subterranean abyss to the highest point in heaven and embracing the whole inhabited world.

The presence of the god was thought to be manifest in his
sanctuary. Unless a god would be found and its locality known, no
possibility for establishing a fruitful communion between the god and
its followers existed. Here the rule of the god was revealed and
extended throughout the universe. "In the temple the god was present
on earth, for the good of the city and kingdom."[1] The presence of
the deity was symbolized by the image of the god in a separate room
corresponding to the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem. In
a very concrete way, the image and location was the presence of the god.

> When the image was carried in procession in the city, or to a
> near-by city, it was the god himself who was there, or who went
> on a visit to another god in his sanctuary. And, if an image of
> a god was carried away by a conqueror, this signified that the
> god had abandoned his city in wrath.[2]

The general public did not have access to the temple, to the
presence of the god. The god held court in the temple and the temple
staff waited on him, dressing him and serving food. The deity could
be seen during great festivals, when he was paraded before the people.
The temple staff of priests and priestesses performed the duties of
offering sacrifices, enacting the ritual dramas and being the media-
tors between the deity and the people. The king played the role of
high priest and participated in the rituals in the role of the god.

When speaking of the gods which resided in these temples, the
ancient people were referring to the forces or powers of the universe

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[1]Helmer Ringgren, Religion of the Ancient Near East (Phila-
delphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 77.

[2]Ringgren, p. 77.

Which have authority, dominion, rule over human life. These forces were mysterious, considered divine. They refer to elements of cosmos or they are the cosmic forces personified. The people experienced them as ultimate. None of the gods was all-embracing or all-powerful; in fact, some even died. They were usually in conflict with one another, which means that the mythology is describing the conflict of cosmic forces. The ancient people also organized the gods into a hierarchy according to family patterns or according to city-state governments.[3]

For the ancients the meaning of life was rooted in the encompassing cosmic order which humans, the society and the gods participated. The gods were a vast cosmic society and the human society was a small-scale version of the cosmic society. To the modern Western mind, the processes of nature are impersonal and objective; we are inclined to reject the personification of earth, water, air, plant life, etc., in the myths. The modern Western world view does not allow us to attribute personal and subjective feelings, thinking and conscious decision-making to weather, earth or water. In the Ancient Near Eastern mythology, where the physical phenomena of the universe are homogenized with personality, a strange blend of impersonal and personal gives us a feeling of unreality and make-believe. However, when the motif of the annual cycle of life is introduced, we recognize the powers with which we all have to deal. Many times

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[3]Isaac Mendelsohn (ed.), Religion of the Ancient Near East (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), p. xi.

these myths are just as descriptive as our modern scientific ex-

planations.[4] The myths were the ancients' description of the ordering

of powers. The cultic rituals, temples and priests became the way

they had access to that power for the benefit and well-being of

humankind.

In order for the relationship of the people with the deities

to be beneficial, the people had to follow cultic rituals to maintain

a correct relationship with the god(s) and reap the rewards. The gods

were the models, guarantors and standards for every pattern of attitude

and activity. Loyalty to the gods meant obedience to the customs and

mores of the society. Life as an organic whole (gods, nature, society,

religion, people) meant that social violation was violation against

the gods.

In the Ancient Near East, one of the major myths and rituals

centered around the Enthronement Festival. Allowing for certain

cultural differences, most of the Ancient Near Eastern Enthronement

myths were similar to the Babylonian myth, the "Enuma Elish." A

summary follows.

Before anything existed, there were a male and female god who

decided to beget a family of divine children and of divine stuff. The

children become too noisy for the parents, so they decide to get rid

of them. The children discover the plan and one of them kills the male

deity, whereupon the mother, Tiamat, who is imaged as salt water in the

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[4]Cornelius Loew, Myth, Sacred History and Philosophy (New York:
Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), pp. 17-18.

form of fish, wages war upon the child deities. The children elect a

Savior-god, Marduk, who agrees to lead them in battle on the condition

that he be King and that they will build him a temple and throne.

A battle ensues and Marduk wins, slices Tiamat open and re-

orders the carcass, creating the cosmos. Held open with two poles

known as foundations, the upper half of the carcass becomes the

firmament and the lower half the sea. Earth is created in the middle.

From the blood of Kingu, the chief of Tiamat's army, Marduk creates

mankind to serve and attend the gods. Cosmos was created out of chaos,

order out of disorder.

Following the creation, the gods build a tower temple for

Marduk, who is then enthroned as Savior-king of the gods. Different

gods are assigned responsibility for the cosmos.

In the Babylonian mythology the gods (powers) which appear to

die always revive. During the winter or in times of chaos Tiamat

unleashes her fury and the battle engages again. So, too, every spring,

Marduk orders the creation and is enthroned as King.

Paul Hanson,[5] in his sketch of the ritual pattern of the con-

flict myth, outlines the Enuma Elish as follows:

    Threat (L:109-11:91)
    Combat - Victory (IV:33-122)
    Theophany of the Divine Warrior (IV:39-60)
    Salvation of the Gods (IV:123-146; VI:1-44. cf. VI:126-127, 149-151)
    Fertility of the Restored Order (V:1-66; cf. VII:1-2, 59-83)

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[5]Paul Hanson, "Zechariah and the Recapitulation of an Ancient
Ritual Pattern," Journal of Biblical Literature, 92 (1973), 54. See
also Paul Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,
1975), p. 302.

Procession and Victory Shout (V:67-89)
Temple Built for Marduk (V:117-156; VI: 45-68)

The myth describes how the powers have ordered the chaos of
the universe and established the institutions of order and rule, i.e.,
the governance of the universe. The mechanism of governance is the
King, whose enthronement coincided yearly with the enthronement of the
heavenly king. Thus, society maintains its order and stability,
justice and righteousness. Here we have the rationale for the es-
tablishment of civil order and the means for governing it - the King.
The cosmic society of the gods wherein the ancients experienced the
quality of ultimacy most directly was replicated in human society in
a microcosmic version.[6]

The Enuma Elish describes not only the cosmic creation but also
the creation of the socio-political realm: the establishment of king-
ship among the gods; the creation of a semi-democratic assembly sharing
power with the King, each deity having an assigned station and res-
ponsibility; then, an absolute monarchy in which the assembly's powers
were taken over by an emperor. In light of Mesopotamian history,
the myth describes the transition from primitive communities to organ-
ized towns to kingly city-state to empire.[7]

The Mesopotamian gods could destroy as well as establish
political units and leaders; they appear in human affairs as agents of
destruction as well as construction. The instrument of destruction
could be both human and natural.

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[6]Loew, p. 5.   [7]Loew, pp. 26-27.

For instance, when barbaric hordes of Elamites swept into the kingdom of Babylon in 2025 B.C., smashing the city of Ur, which for a century and a half had been the capitol of sizable empire, the wild destructive power of the attack was identified as the work of Enlil. The invaders were likened to a storm that swept down on the city. When we remember that Enlil was "Lord Storm," we see that this picture is a remarkably direct way of saying that Enlil engineered the disaster. In a poem describing the fall of Ur, Enlil was presented as the divine destroyer.[8]

Enlil sends both storm and invaders, carrying out the decision of the assembly of the gods. It is important to note that the socio-political structure of the gods did not change in such a situation. "The divinely established institutional structures of monarchy and social organization were considered permanent; military upheavals took place within the structure."[9]

At this point a clarifying note of the difference between the Mesopotamian and Canaanite mythologies needs to be added. While the Canaanite myths carry the same motifs, there is not enough evidence to indicate whether there is one coherent epic or three independent myths. In the Ugaritic literature discovered at Ras Shamra variant conflict myths are found, but both the Yamm and Mot episodes follow the same pattern. According to Hanson, the reconstructed outline of the Baal-Yamm conflict is as follows:[10]

Threat (2.1/_37_7)
Combat - Victory (2.4/_68_7)
Temple built (4/_51_7)
Banquet (4.6.39ff/_51_7)
Manifestation of Baal's Universal Reign (anticipated: (2.4.9-10/_68_7);
    manifested: 4.7.9-12/_51_7)
Theophany of Divine Warrior (4.7.27-39/_51_7)
Fertility of Restored Order (anticipated: 4.5.68-71/_51_7; effected
    4.7.18-30/_51_7; cf. 6.3.6-7, 12-13/_49_7)

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[8]Loew, p. 29. [9]Loew, p. 30. [10]Hanson, _Dawn_, p. 302.

The battle between Baal and Yamm (sea) establishes Baal's victory over Yamm and his kingship among the gods. The title "Baal" means "lord" or "owner," designating the male deity who owns the land and controls its fertility.[11] This myth does not carry the cosmic reordering of the universe the way the Enuma Elish does. The other motifs are the building of Baal's house (temple) in order for him to exercise his royal power and Baal's death and resurrection in his battle with Mot (death).

The motif of death and resurrection of the Savior god is expressed in the Babylonian New Year's Festival and in Baal's combat with Mot. Mot is the "darling of El," who dwells in the underworld - the land of the dead. He is the god of the summer heat and drought which makes vegetation wither. Mot sends a message to Baal to descend into the underworld. Baal dies as a result of this conflict. Anat, or Ashtar, Baal's consort, who is a goddess of fertility described as wearing a necklace of skulls and bones and wading up to her hips in blood from her carnage, is seized with a longing for Baal and goes to look for Mot and kills him. There is, at this point, a gap in the text, but Baal is revived and El names Baal prince of the earth; he then ascends his royal throne. After another gap, Baal and Mot fight in a great duel which ends in the defeat of Mot.[12] The allusions in the myth make it clear that it refers to the alternation of the seasons, to the death and renewal of vegetation. Scholars assume that the text

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[11]Bernhard W. Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 102.

[12]Ringgren, pp. 148-150.

accompanied a cultic drama whose rites and ritual actions described

and maintained the course of nature reflected in the myth and which

insured the fertility of the land.[13]

The ground was the sphere of divine power; the baal of a region

was owner of the ground and its fertility depended upon sexual relations

between the baal and his consort.

> When the rains came and the earth and water mingled, the mysterious
> powers of fertility stirred again. New life was resurrected after
> the barrenness of winter. This astonishing revival of nature, men
> believed, was due to sexual intercourse between Baal and his part-
> ner Baalath (Ashtart).[14]

In J. C. DeMoor's reconstruction of the Canaanite New Year's

festival at Ugarit,[15] it is held that two festivals existed, one in

the spring and one in the autumn. The autumn festival inaugurated the

cultic and agricultural year, beginning on a new moon and, as in many

other Near Eastern festivals, lasting seven days. Many weeks before the

actual New Year of the summer solstice, a dream-oracle establishes that

Baal is again ready to come back to life from his confinement in the

nether world. The sun is beseeched to seek him in the abode of the dead.

In preparation for his return, new wine is poured into vats and

wreaths are worn as a prelude to the actual New Year. On the eve of the

New Year, people pray for a safe journey with the sun guiding Baal back

to earth. During the nocturnal journey primordial monsters are defeated

and the cosmic battle that had taken place at creation is remembered.

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[13]Ringgren, p. 150.   [14]Anderson, p. 103.

[15]Johannes C. DeMoor, New Year with Canaanites and Israel
(Kampen: Kok, 1972), p. 5. See also pp. 4-12.

"On New Year's Day Baal's victory over Death (Motu) is celebrated."[16]
The victorious god is reinstalled as king on his throne, appearing with
thunder and lightening. The resurrection means that the rains and rain-
like dew will come again.

During the New Year's Festival a ritual battle was "fought."
Blood shed during this battle acted as a rain charm.[17] Other elements
included: the sacrificial banquet; the new wine and bread which everyone
ate; the sacred marriage; communion with the dead; recital of the myth,
music, dancing; the cultic contribution leveed to pay for the festival;
the king as principal officiant, acting as the divine bridegroom. Al-
though the Canaanite New Year was primarily the festival of the transi-
tion from the dry to the wet season, it probably was also the renewal
of the king's kingship like that of Baal and the latter's victory over
death.[18] The Ugaritic New Year's Festival was a seasonal myth of Baal.

> The people of Ugarit believed that the macrocosmic events of that
> age were repeated annually on a microcosmic scale. The mythical
> history of Ba lu was their explanation for the repetitive
> mechanism of the climatological, agricultural and cultic year.[19]

In the Babylonian New Year's Festival, after Marduk has con-
quered Tiamat and celebrated his victory at a banquet, he returns to
the temple for the sexual consummation of the sacred marriage with the
goddess Istar. This union is enacted by the king and a sacred female
at the summit of the ziggurat.

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[16]De Moor, p. 6.

[18]De Moor, p. 12.

[17]De Moor, p. 6.

[19]De Moor, p. 4.

> The union of the god and goddess was in the final analysis an
> event in nature, and its immediate result was the restoration of
> the fertility of fields, flocks and men after the stagnancy of
> winter. The sacred marriage marked the end of the period during
> which life in nature had been suspended. The Great Mother had
> been impregnated and new life would come.[20]

The New Years Festival interwove the sexual and biological symbolism

with the sociopolitical. Both fertility and political symbolism could

express the loss and rejuvenation of vitality, degeneration and re-

generation, the threat of death and assurance of life, the end of

winter and the newness of spring. One of the sacred marriages, which

includes its banquet feast, depicts elaborate fertility gardens out-

side and the royal gathering of gods, priests, warriors and political

leaders inside, expressing the interweaving of political, economic-

productive, defense and bureaucratic powers of a society being

perpetuated and renewed.[21]

In Canaan humans were not merely spectators to the sacred

marriage;[22] they played a supporting role in it. It was possible to

assist, through the initiative or sympathic magic of ritual enactment,

the fertility powers in reaching their consummation to insure the

welfare and prosperity of the land. By imitating the action of Baal

with Ashtart, the human pair could bring the divine pair together in

fertilizing union. A prominent feature of the Canaanite cult was

sacred temple prostitution. This practice was not just the expression

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[20]Loew, p. 41. [21]Loew, p. 41.

[22]Benedikt Otzen, Hans Gottlieb, Knud Jeppen, Myths in the Old
Testament (London: SCM Press, 1980), pp. 107-108.

of a desire for pleasure but was instrinsically bound with the belief

that nature, upon which a farmer's existence depended, was governed by

the vitalities of sex - the powers of male and female. "Through

sexual ceremonies farmers could swing into the rhythms of the agri-

cultural world, and even keep those rhythms going through the

techniques of religious magic."[23] This sympathetic or imitative magic

rested upon the assumption that, when humans imitated the actions of

the gods, a power was released to bring the intended action about.

In the Ancient Near East sex was elevated to the divine realm.

Divine power was disclosed in nature's mystery of fertility, and the

fertility rites were the rituals of worshipping these divine powers.

> The purpose of religion was to preserve and enhance the fertility
> upon which man was dependent for his existence. It sought to
> control the gods in the interest of human well-being. And, since
> this religion aimed to maintain the harmony and rhythm of the
> natural order, it was a serviceable tool for the aristocracy who
> wished to maintain the social status quo against disruptive
> changes. Baalism catered to man's desire for security in the
> precarious environment of the Fertile Crescent.[24]

The mythic imagery used to describe Yahweh's activity comes from

the storm god symbols in the cosmic battles. From the earliest days of

its life, Israel used and reshaped the various Canaanite and Mesopo-

tamian mythic themes and traditions to describe their encounter with

Yahweh.

Many of the scholarly studies which trace the connection be-

tween Yahwism and Ancient Near Eastern mythology come from those in the

"myth and ritual" school. Those emphasizing the enthronement festival

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[23]Anderson, p. 104.　　　　[24]Anderson, p. 107.

stress the dependence of Israel upon its mythopoetic environment for the images, metaphors and concepts it used to elucidate Yahweh's action. Those same metaphors are also reshaped by Israel in light of Yahwism.

The debate among scholars concerning the Israelite New Year's festival is extensive and beyond the scope of this paper. However, this project is in agreement with those who posit a major Israelite festival influenced by the Ancient Near Eastern enthronement festival, persons who include:

S. Mowinckel,[25] who proposes a fall New Year's festival of the enthronement of Yahweh;

B. W. Anderson,[26] who holds that the mythological influence was transformed in light of Israel's historical and covenantal understanding;

H. J. Kraus,[27] who, while rejecting the enthronement festival, posits a different kind of festival - the royal Zion festival;

A. Weiser,[28] who deals with the covenant festival of Yahweh;

M Cross,[29] who proposes two New Year's festivals which were covenant renewals;

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[25]Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), pp. 106-192.

[26]Anderson, pp. 481-484.

[27]H. J. Kraus, Worship in Israel (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), pp. 179-226.

[28]Arthur Weiser, The Psalms (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 23-52.

[29]Frank M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 123.

and, more recently, P. Hanson's conflict myth ritual pattern[30]
and J. C. De Moor,[31] whose study confirms some aspects of Mowinckel's
proposal. The most helpful is J. Morgenstern's article, "New Year,"
in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,[32] where he suggests that
Absalom's attempt to usurp the crown from David was timed for the
New Year's Day. On the first day of the festival, the king of Jerusalem
led a solemn procession from the city, across Kidron Brook up to the
Mount of Olives to the sanctuary at the top (II Samuel 15:32). In the
folklore of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives covered the exit from the
nether world. Therefore, the king would be in the realm of the King of
death. In custody of the god of the nether world, the king, playing the
role of the dead god of vegetation, would stay for seven days. On the
eighth day - New Year's Day - at sunrise came the moment of inauguration.
The Mount of Olives was thought to split asunder and, through the open-
ing, the god of vegetation would be resurrected, returning from death in
procession back to Jerusalem to his temple and the enthronement.

F. M. Cross has shown how the mythic conflict between Baal and
the Sea (Yamm) played a primary role in developing the Exodus - Conquest -
Epic tradition. In the archaic victory song of the Seas in Exodus
15:16-18, Cross believes that it was associated with the spring New Year's
festival. While in the poem the Sea is not personified or in hostile
combat with Yahweh, we see that the structure of the poem follows

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[30]Hanson, Dawn, pp. 1-31.   [31]De Moor, p. 26.

[32]Julian Morgenstern, "New Year," in Interpreter's Dictionary
of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:544-546.

the old mythic pattern:

> "1. the combat of the Divine warrior and his victory at the Sea,
> 2. the building of a sanctuary on the 'mount of possession' won in battle, and
> 3. the god's manifestation of 'eternal' kingship."[33]

From there we turn to the texts in Psalm 89:10ff; 93:1-4; Isaiah 27:1; Job 7:12, 9:8, 26:12,38:7-11; Nahum 1:4, where Yahweh directly battles with the sea or sea-dragon. In these texts the strong mythic element is not tied to the historic event of the Reed Sea. In other texts such as Psalm 77 and Isaiah 51:9-11, the creation myth is tied to the Exodus - conquest event, especially in Isaiah 51:9-11, where the old Exodus describes the New Exodus, the return to Zion and the feast of the New Jerusalem.

One of the primary elements coming from this Canaanite mythic pattern is the emphasis upon Yahweh as divine warrior. In Psalm 24:7-10 we see an antiphonal liturgy used in the autumn festival reflecting the victory of Yahweh in the primordial battle and his subsequent enthronement. Again, the Canaanite pattern lies behind the Psalm. The glorious king who comes is the Divine Warrior. The procession of the Warrior-King into his temple may be said to reenact the founding of the Temple (at the fall New Year) and the choosing of Zion as the shrine of the Ark.

The image of the Divine Warrior merges out of the mythic enthromenent pattern and the holy war ideology. The language of holy war, which comes from the ideology of the league, provides the additional theme to interpret Psalm 24. The "ritual conquest, preserved in the

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[33]Cross, p. 142.

Gilgal cultus, makes possible the transition from cultus of the league

to cult of the kingdom and, eventually, the theology of the apocalyp-

tic movement."[34]

In the exilic and post-exilic prophets and in apocalyptic

eschatology, the Day of Yahweh combined the kingship and conquest

themes in the cult.

> The Day of Yahweh is the day of victory in holy warfare; it is
> also the Day of Yahweh's festival, when the ritual conquest was
> reenacted in the procession of the Ark and in the procession of
> the King of Glory to the Temple.[35]

While Cross stresses the early development of Yahwistic theology

in light of the Ancient Near Eastern mythology, J. J. M. Roberts[36] and

Thomas W. Mann,[37] following Roberts and Eissfeldt, emphasize the

syncretism of the royal theology which gave theological legitimacy to the

national-political claim of Israel and the Davidic dynasty and the

exaltation of Yahweh.

Cross notes that, with the end of the monarchy and the prophets

of that era, the exilic period gives way to a new synthesis freed from

the royal ideology and cultic function. The Divine Warrior and the

enthronement myths are transformed into a New Exodus and into an

eschatological battle. The royal festival becomes the Messianic

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[34]Cross, p. 105.   [35]Cross, p. 111.

[36]J. J. M. Roberts, "The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition,"
Journal of Biblical Literature, 93 (1973), 339-44.

[37]Thomas W. Mann, Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite
Tradition (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 223-224.

banquet. "We detect tendencies which will produce the Apocalyptic in which historical and mythological elements are combined in a new creation and take on a new life."[38]

Paul Hanson fills in the apocalyptic understanding and shows the effect of this development. Rather than accepting the traditional view of the discontinuity of prophecy and apocalypse (the latter derived from Persian dualism and, therefore, theologically inferior), Hanson takes the task of demonstrating the unbroken development of apocalyptic out of pre-exilic and exilic prophecy.[39] A primary example we shall focus upon is Zechariah 9, since it is used to describe Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.

The Divine Warrior furnishes the background against which the hymn in Zechariah 9 becomes intellgible. Again, it originated in the league conquest tradition and the enthronement tradition of the royal cult which drew upon Canaanite and Mesopotamian conflict myths. The structure of Zechariah 9 is an adaptation of the league-royal cultic ritual pattern of the Divine Warrior. Its structure is as follows:[40]

Conflict - victory (1-7)
Temple secured (5)
Victory shout and procession (9)
Manifestation of Yahweh's universal reign (10)
Salvation: captives released (11-13)
Theophany of Divine Warrior (14)
Sacrifice and banquet (15)
Fertility of restored order (16-17)

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[38]Cross, p. 144.   [39]Hanson, Dawn, pp. 2-8.

[40]Hanson, Dawn, pp. 315-316.

The first strophe portrays Yahweh as the divine warrior coming from the north, conquering a kingdom for himself. Here Yahweh intervenes in history, but there is no specific historical conquest or conqueror, no foreign king as Yahweh's instrument. The path of conquest by the Divine Warrior is the border that outlines the ancient ideal kingdom of Israel which is remembered by tradition. These seem to be the ancient boundaries of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age,[41] which was promised as Israel's inheritance.

In the next episode (v.8), the goal of the conflict and battle, like the Marduk and Baal materials, is the return of the victorious warrior to his temple. By maintaining the temple, the warrior-king establishes or re-establishes his kingdom.

The triumphant return of the victor - king tc his temple is heralded with victory shouts (v.9). But what king is riding upon an ass? Is the king the anointed human or Yahweh? In the royal ritual it was probably the human king celebrating Yahweh's renewed reign and the re-establishment of his anointed. The powers of the cosmos are defeated and the king triumphs, victorious yet humble, bearing the marks of earlier conflict. Hanson[42] conjectures that here is a contrast between the ass and the charior and horses that will be banished. It is not because the ass is lowly; rather, he suggests that the ass represents the ideal king in royal procession. The Old Testament has a bias against horse and chariot as royal symbols (I Samuel 8:11; II Samuel 15:1;

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[41] Hanson, "Zechariah," p. 29.

[42] Hanson, Dawn, p. 320 and "Zechariah," p. 51.

Deuteronomy 17:16; I Kings 1:5, 10:26). This bias comes from the holy war where Yahweh is the only King of Israel. The contrast is between two royal images stemming from rival ideologies. The image of the king riding an ass comes from the Holy War tradition and the horse and chariot symbolized military kingship. The royal ideal would triumph in the end. Here the anointed ruler is celebrated with the divine king. Without any sense of contradiction, a fluidity of god and king runs throughout the royal psalms and other ancient Near Eastern royal ideologies. In light of Hanson's earlier comments about the Divine Warrior, while in the royal ritual the king probably rode the ass, in Zechariah 9 the king who come is Yahweh - representing the idealized King of Israel.

In verse 10 the newly established shalom is secured through the destruction of weapons. Incorporating standard phrases from Babylonian and Assyrian royal literature, Yahweh's universal reign is established.

Salvation is established once the Divine Warrior King is enthroned (verses 11-13). His double weapons are not mythical but rather the historical entities of Judah and Ephram. In the theophany (v.14) the symbols from the cosmic storm god myth are used. Here we have the conceptual world of the myth, Marduk rushing forth to battle Tiamat with his arrows, Baal vanquishing Yamm.

The culmination of the ritual pattern is in the bloody sacrifice and banquet that is held. This indicates the original fertility function of the ancient cult. Victory alone does not restore fertility.

A blood sacrifice of the enemy is necessary to unlock the earth's
fertility. John Gray[43] explains that

> ...the bloodbath of the goddess Anat as relating to a rite...of
> transition between the sterility of the late Syrian summer and the
> new season of fertility....seems to us to indicate at once a rite
> of separation from the phase of sterility and a rite of imitative
> magic to stimulate a literal outpouring of fresh vitality, the
> blood being to the ancient Semite the life essence.

Also, in light of De Moor's comments,[44] the blood sacrifice is
a result of the divine judge passing judgement upon those unfaithful
in his absence.

In the alteration of the myth by Yahwism, a goddess does not
intervene; rather, Yahweh prepares the sacrifice and banquet, which
was the function of the king in the new festival. The collapsed order
is restored at Yahweh's reuqest and fertility is also restored
(verses 16-17).

Hanson traces the ritual conflict myth as it moves from
Exodus 15, where the pattern is used to describe the historical realm
as the arena of divine activity rather than the cosmic, to Judges 5,
where the pattern is used to dramatize the deeds of a daring woman.
Here Yahweh relies on human agents. From Judges 5 a short step is
taken to the classical prophets. In taking that step, the ritual
pattern is discarded for the assembly of elders motif. The royal
cult maintains the mythic pattern until the demise of the monarchy.
Second Isaiah re-introduces the mythic features, giving cosmic

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[43]John Gray, The Legacy of Canaan (Leiden: Brill, 1965), p. 45.

[44]De Moor, pp. 6, 8.

dimension to Yahweh's power and saving activity in history. In the

Apocalyptic material we can discern the re-mythologizing of Yahweh's

intervention. The prophetic promise of restoration is placed within

the ritual pattern of conflict myth.

> Divine action at no point is tied to historical events. Rather,
> the movement of the hymn is elevated to the cosmic level, i.e.,
> to the original realm of the ritual pattern of the conflict
> myth....Yahweh, the storm-deity, intervenes directly, securing
> universal dominion and restoring fertility to the earth.[45]

Besides the Enthronement - creation - fertility myth there is a

second creation motif which depicts the economic function of the king

and humankind. In pictures found throughout the Ancient Near East we

see the mythological use of the tree of life, the water of life, the

King as the gardener appointed by the gods. In the Yahwist account the

deity creates a garden which grows the prototype of every form of life

and in which there is no sickness or death; wild animals do not prey

on one another.[46] Out of the center of the garden flows the source

of water which gives life to everything and in the garden is the tree

of life, which is the distillation of all of life. Adam, the King, is

the gardener who is to keep and till the garden. In the legend of

Sargon, the King announces that he was appointed to be the gardener

by the god Akki, the drawer of water. "While I was a gardener Ishtar

granted me (her) love and for four and (....) years I exercised

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[45]Hanson, "Zechariah," p. 59.

[46]S. H. Hooke, Middle Eastern Mythology (Baltimore: Penquin
Books, 1963), pp. 115, 144.

kingship."[47] Then he recounts the people he has governed and the conquests he has accomplished. The king's function was to give life to the people and, as the bringer of life, he facilitated blessing upon the people. David is represented as bringer of life to the people of Israel. When he is no longer sexually potent and has lost his vitality, then he is replaced (I Kings 1:1-4). The King is depicted in Isaiah as a branch or root of the tree of life (Isaiah 11:1). Ezekiel, in his lamentation over the King of Tyre, uses the garden tradition to show how the king has violated his responsibility as keeper of the garden by corruption and idolatry, thus heightening his downfall. (Ezekiel 28:11-19)

Israelites throughout their history did "vernacular theology." Converging their traditions with elements of other Ancient Near Eastern cultures, they described Yahweh's sovereign power and their continual relationship to that power in the vernacular of their day. Israel's primary struggle was with Yahweh in the sphere of human structures and relationships, not with the cosmic or social powers, authorities or their representatives. Each new generation re-interpreted the tradition for their time.

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[47]James B. Pritchard (ed.), The Ancient Near East: An Anthology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 85-86.

Chapter III

YAHWISM'S CONFLICT WITH ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN MYTHOLOGY

Throughout the period of the monarchy the conflict with fertility cults dominates the prophetic sources. Whether the fertility aspects were adapted under Yahwism or accepted in direct competition, they came under prophetic judgement. The clash between Elijah and the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel, Hosea's opposition to Israelite participation in the fertility rites (Hosea 4:13, 9:1-3), the Deuteronomic reformation under Josiah, especially Jeremiah 7:16-26 and Jeremiah, chapter 44 - all provide examples of this conflict.

In Jeremiah, chapter 44, the conflict is clearly portrayed. Here Jeremiah sends a message to the refugees who have escaped to Egypt. The word of Yahweh summons them to stop serving the Queen of Heaven. They have been burning incense to her, pouring out libations to her and making cakes bearing her image. If they do not turn from their wickedness, says Jeremiah, Yahweh will destroy them. The people protest. They will not listen; they will continue their practices.

What has happened that led the people to choose the Queen of Heaven? What does it mean to choose her instead of Yahweh? Why do the people still reject Yahweh despite the long tradition of prophets and the destruction of Jerusalem? Why have the people chosen another god than Yahweh?

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had captured Jerusalem in 587 B.C.[1] The city was torched and leveled. Judah was destroyed as a political, social and economic entity.

> Its cities destroyed, its economy ruined, its leading citizens killed or deported, the population consisted chiefly of poor peasants considered incapable of making trouble. (II Kings 25:12; Jeremiah 52:16)[2]

Gedaliah was appointed governor and the seat of government moved to Mizpah. He attempted to restore some degree of normalcy, stability and security, but that hope was dashed by an aborted revolution led by Ishmael. A member of the royal house conspired with the king of Ammon, assassinated Gedaliah and massacred the military garrison of Babylonian soldiers.

Fearing Babylonian reprisals and vengeance, the people abandoned the land and fled to Egypt, seeking refuge there. Egypt was still not under Babylonian rule. Jeremiah pleaded with them to stay; he assured them of no retirbution by Babylon. However, during the time Jeremiah had waited for the Word of Yahweh, those who wanted to seek the safety of Egypt persuaded the group to leave, and they went to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. When they arrived in Thapanhes, Jeremiah's oracle did not hold a bright future for the people. Nebuchadrezzar would destroy Egypt; the people would not escape.

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[1] John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 328-331; David Noel Freedman, "The Biblical Idea of History," Interpretation, 21:1 (January 1967), 32-37.

[2] Bright, p. 330.

The historic crisis of the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, the ensuing exile, resulted in a momentous theological crisis for the people. Their belief system, world view, state and cult, and their social life collapsed under the historical events and crises of the time. The war with Babylon made the power of their God ambiguous and uncertain. The people were unprepared to meet the enormity of the emergency.[3] The theological challenge centered around three issues.

First, the symbolic structures of their reality disappeared in flame and ashes, dust and wind. The old institutions were gone or useless. The temple as the abode of Yahweh's presence was destroyed. The defender of Mt. Zion had not protected. The King and priesthood were carried into slavery. The promised land no longer held promise for them. The royal theology was in shambles.

Yahweh as a god was called into question. Was Israel's god still a god, especially their god? Was Yahweh in control of events? Was Yahweh a God of blessing, able to sustain his people? Was His creation a just order? Was Yahweh's action still trustworthy, a deity faithful to the promises made? Yahweh's relationship to his people was completely undertain.[4]

Secondly, was Yahweh a just God? Was He faithful to the covenant? "How did Yahweh's will to save work out in practice for

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[3]Bright, p. 331.

[4]Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 2:263.

individuals?"[5] Had not the events of history proven God's indifference

to individuals regardless of their guilt or innocence?

Thirdly, it seemed that Israel was unable to maintain the

covenant relationship with Yahweh. As a people Israel was unable to

obey Yahweh's torah and statutes. Up against the whole will of Yahweh

the people were unable to give allegiance and obedience. This cannot

be Yahweh's people. Then whose people are they?[6]

Out of the tragic events they experienced, the people were

confronted with these agonizing questions. The official explanations

of Yahweh's sovereign power and justice could not answer. The re-

sponse of the people indicates that some appropriated other gods,

others cried out for a nostalgic return, some protested their inno-

cence and others set out to reconstruct the theology. The group which

fled to Egypt chose the first option. They held a different view of

Judah's history than Jeremiah.

In its canonical form the prophetic announcements of judgement[7]

in Jeremiah, chapter 44, are structured according to the covenant

lawsuit form (Gattung).[8]

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[5]Rad, 2:266.   [6]Rad, 2:267-269.

[7]Claus Westermann, Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 129-181.

[8]G. Ernest Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32," in Gerhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (eds.), Israel's Prophetic Heritage (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962) pp. 36-67, especially pp. 52-54. Eberhard von Waldow, Der Traditions-geschichtliche Hintergrund der Prophetischen Gerichtsreden (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963), pp. 10-11. Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Law Suit in the Prophets," Journal of Biblical Literature, 78 (1959), 285-95.

Utterances of Accusation

44:1	Commissioning of oracle	
2a	Summons to hear	Accusation
2b-5	Accusation and development	based on
6a	Message formula - Therefore	Past
6b	Intervention of God	Judgement
6c	Results of intervention	

44:7a	Summons to hear	
7b-10	An Appeal, accusation and development	Accusation
11a	Message formula	based on
11b-12a	Intervention of God	Present
12b-14	Results	Judgement

Utterances of Defense

44:15a	Introduction of the accused
15b	Answer
16	Not listen
17a	Covenant with Queen of Heaven and stipulations
17b	Recital of blessing
18	Curse of past
19	Group's choice

Utterance of Judge - The Indictment

44:20	Introduction	
21-22a	Counter accusation and development to refute defense interpretation	Past Indictment
22b	Message formula - Therefore	
22b	Intervention	
23	Indictment - because of their activity	Present Indictment

Utterance of Judge - The Sentencing

44:24-25a	Summons to hear
25b	Accusation and development
26a	Message formula - Therefore
26b	Announcement - intervention
27-28	Results
28d	The people silenced
29-30	The sign

As this passage is structured, it sets the oracles of Jeremiah in the context of a lawsuit which Yahweh has with the people. Yahweh is the defendant and the Judge. This is a great trial; all are assembled. In order to grasp the full impact of this text, an examination of the covenant lawsuit form and its _sitz im leben_ is in order.

Since the work of Hermann Gunkel, the "gattung" for a legal dispute is called the Gerichtsrede or lawsuit.[9] Most studies refering to this form deal with it in the prophetic literature.

In Israel, in a legal situation, there were three main characters in a dispute: the plaintiff or accuser, the defendant or the accused, and the judge or judges. Usually, in the prophetic oracles, Yahweh is the plaintiff and Israel or foreign gods are the defendants. If Yahweh is a party to the controversy, who is the judge? According to Gunkel, in the speeches of the plaintiff, i.e., Yahweh, the heavens and earth are judges. (Psalm 50; Isaiah 1:2-3, 3:13-15; Jeremiah 2:4ff; Micah 6:1-8).[10]

In attempting to clarify just who is the judge, we must understand the role of heaven and earth in the "lawsuit" form. Gunkel says that Yahweh, the plaintiff, calls heaven and earth to serve as judges in the dispute between Him and Israel.[11] S. R. Driver holds that heaven and earth are neither judges nor witnesses but worthy auditors of a

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[9]Huffmon, p. 285.   [10]Huffmon, p. 286.

[11]Huffmon, p. 290.

solemn song (especially referring to Deuteronomy 32; Isaiah 1;

Psalm 50).[12] R. B. Y. Scott's interpretation is structured around

Isaiah's oracles. Heaven and earth are witnesses to the judicial

proceedings, but they are population areas - heavenly host and people

of the earth - and not natural elements.[13] G. Ernest Wright regards

the heaven and earth in the light of divine assembly in which Yahweh

is the head and the members are the host of heaven and earth.[14]

F. M. Cross, building upon H. W. Robinson's concept of a divine

council,[15] says that the references to the natural elements "contains

direct reminiscences of Yahweh's address to the powers of heaven and

earth which formed his court."[16] Thus, the thesis of both Wright and

Cross is that the prophetic lawsuit-oracle originated in the conception

of God's heavenly assembly acting as a court.[17] "Yahweh takes two roles.

He is at once party to the covenant and Judge of the Divine Assembly."[18]

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[12]Huffmon, p. 290.   [13]Huffmon, p. 290.

[14]G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment
(London: SCM Press, 1950), pp. 35-36.

[15]H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old
Testament (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 167-170.

[16]Frank M. Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,"
Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 12 (1953), 275, n. 3.

[17]Wright, "Lawsuit of God," p. 46.

[18]Frank M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge:
Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 189.

Huffmon rejects this concept because he feels there is no direct evidence to support it. Basing his argument on Mendenhall's work on the covenant,[19] he holds that the natural elements were invoked as witnesses because they were involved in the carrying out of the blessings and curses of the covenant treaty.[20] The natural elements were appealed to not because they were members of the council of Yahweh, nor because of the solemnity of the proceedings, but because the framework of the lawsuit is dependent on the tradition that the inanimate elements of the natural world are witnesses to the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.[21]

After Huffmon's criticism, Wright clarified his position, basing his argument on Mendenhall. Wright interprets the natural elements listed after the names of the gods in the Hittite treaty form as summarizing categories into which all gods, known and unknown, could fall. They are not additional gods. In a dispute the suzerain has only to call in the witnesses of the original treaty and let them hear the charges not to act as judges but to testify that they witnessed the original oath which the vassal has broken - the reason for the dispute. The natural elements do not have independent power to judge. The suzerain claims all authority and power to judge.[22]

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[19]G. E. Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East (Pittsburg: Presbyterian Board of Colportage, 1955), pp. 26-46.

[20]Huffmon, p. 292.   [21]Huffmon, p. 292.

[22]Wright, "Lawsuit of God," pp. 46-47.

Since the natural elements are not the judge but rather witnesses, then who is the judge? Waldow points to Jeremiah 2:1-3 and Hosea 4:1-3 as examples where Yahweh can be the judge and at the same time a member of the dispute - the plaintiff or the defendant.[23] In Jeremiah 2:1-3, following the "gattung" of the defense of the alien, Yahweh gives exonerating evidence in favor of the accused Israel. In Hosea 4:1-3, Yahweh is the plaintiff who summons Israel to a controversy, but the judgement which follows is that of a judge's decision. Yahweh is at once the accuser and the judge.[24]

The following are the actors in the legal controversy: the plaintiff, the defendant, the judge and the witnesses. Yahweh can be a party to the dispute and, at the same time, the judge of the dispute.

Next we examine the "gattung" of the lawsuit. Huffmon[25] outlines the basic form which Gunkel and Begrich describe:

I. A description of the scene of judgement

II. The speech of the plaintiff
   A. Heaven and earth are appointed judges (following the preceeding discussion, they are appointed as witnesses.)
   B. Summons to the defendant (or judge or witnesses)
   C. Address in the second person to the defendant
      1. Accusation in question form to the defendant
      2. Refutation of the defendant's possible arguments
      3. Specific indictments

Gunkel and Begrich offer another form which we will not deal with. However, it suffers the same problem which the one above does. Huffmon does not attempt to correct or alter the Gunkel-Begrich form; he is

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[23]Waldow, pp. 13-14.   [24]Waldow, pp. 13-14.

[25]Huffmon, p. 285.

interested in finding the _sitz_ _im_ _leben_ of the lawsuit form. By

quickly glancing over the above outline, one can see that there is

no place for the defendant to plead his case. There is no place where

the accused can argue with the plaintiff and present opposing accu-

sations and evidence on his own behalf.

Waldow attempts to correct and give a balanced picture of

the "lawsuit" form. Pulling two theories together, he sees the

"gattung" coming out of the secular legal life (the profane history

hypothesis of Gunkel and Begrich and of Hans J. Boecker) and out of

the cult (the cult history hypothesis of Wirthwein). He distinguished

between the appeal oracle and the oracle before the court of justice.

First, the appeal oracles are in the realm of pre-judgemental opposition,

before the case is brought before the legal assembly. Although these

oracles are still in the area of "private" argumentation, they contain

the demand for a judgement or the appeal itself. (I Samuel 24:13;

Judges 11:27b; Genesis 31:37b)[26] He says that there are three forms

of the appeal oracle: 1) appeal of the accuser, which contains

a) the question to the accused about the reason and motive for his

offense, b) the proof of the accusation, c) a suggestion of a judge-

ment with reasons or evidence, d) the summons of the accused to

judgement in order to confer the power of the law upon the suggested

judgement; 2) the appeal of the accused, which contains a) questions to

the accuser about the alleged offense, b) the assertion and the proof

of the individual's innocence, c) counter-charges and counter-

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[26]Waldow, p. 5.

assertions of innocence and d) the appeal itself, which is a demand

for a judgement before a judge; 3) the appeal for the beginning of the

handling of the stipulations. Here the accused and accuser are not

distinguished; the confrontation is a statement which the other party

meets with a counter-statement, declaration is over against declaration,

and the appeal is for judgement of the correct statement.[27]

Secondly, Waldow says that there are three forms of speech

or oracles given before the court. First, the speech of accusation in

which the plaintiff brings forth his complaint; there is not a fixed

form for this "gattung" because it is governed by the type of offense.

Generally, the accusation is directed toward the court and the accuser,

if he appears, is in the third person. Waldow distinguishes three

possible ways to bring an accusation: first, the bringing of an

accusation connected with a motion for judgement; second, the bring-

ing of an accusation throught the deposition of witnesses in which the

witnesses open the trial through their testimony; third, the bringing

of an accusation through the report of damage done.

The second speech before the legal assembly is the defense

statement. There are two forms for self-defense speeches; first, self-

defense addressed to the accuser which is in the second person. This

form contains the assertion of the defendant's innocence by disputing

the accusation, by questioning the offense which is then turned

against the accuser with some elements out of the accusation, and a

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[27]Waldow, pp. 5-6.

counter-attack through the assertion of the offense of the accuser.
The second form seeks to prove the accused's innocence by using
another interpretation of the facts of the case in dispute. One
final form of a defense statement is the defense of the alien or
foreigner. Here another person of the village presents the defense
material on behalf of the accused alien, in which he reprimands the
plaintiff with the correct information about the past events.

The final form of speech or oracle belongs to the judge and
his judicial decision. In this form are the words by the judge which
terminate the trial. This is done by a pronouncement of decision in
which the guilt is fixed openly before all. The oracle is then
closed with an explanation of results which are to occur from the
pronounced decision. (See Hosea 4:1-3)[28]

Waldow ends this section of his discussion with two conclusions.
First, the prophetic utterances of judgement originated in the profane
legal utterances. The prophets took over the "gattungen" of the sphere
of daily life to emphasize their words and message. This was fairly
easy for the prophets to do because the prophets themselves opposed the
people in the rebuke and accusation situation. They stood as the
accuser over against the people who had broken the commands and laws
of their God.[29]

Waldow's distinction between the profane legal life and the
prophet's "borrowing" of it is too great a distinction. B. Gemser

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[28]Waldow, pp. 6-8.   [29]Waldow, p. 9.

is on firmer ground at this point.[30] He shows how the rîb or

controversy pattern was within the Hebrew mentality. He notes that

the controversy pattern is most often used metaphorically as a form of

thinking and feeling, a category, a frame of mind; it is not simply a

literary device. Waldow borders on this approach when he says that

the lawsuit form is not just a literary style but expresses a kerygma.[31]

When the controversy pattern, of which the lawsuit is a part, is seen

as a conceptual mode in the Israelite mind, then we can understand

the force and power that the lawsuit had for the prophet and the people.

The second result is that the prophetic oracle of judgement

and lawsuit are not just an individual "gattung" but rather a collective

concept for different "gattungen." Three forms of judgemental utter-

ances may be distinguished; they are outlined as follows:[32]

1. The Utterance of Accusation
   a. the appeal of the plaintiff
   b. the statement of complaint before the trial

2. The Utterance of Defense
   a. the appeal of the defendant
   b. the utterances of the accused, or
   c. the utterance of the defense of the alien

3. The Utterance of the Judge
   a. guilt established
   b. sentence given

Waldow further observes that, as in the oracles of judgement

in Second Isaiah (50:1-3), Yahweh defends himself against Israel's

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[30]B. Gemser, "The Rîb - or Controversy - Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," in M. Noth and D. W. Thomas (eds.), Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East (Leiden: Brill, 1960), p. 128.

[31]Waldow, p. 31.   [32]Waldow, pp. 9-11.

accusation. Yahweh asks for evidence of the divorce attributed to him, and, at the same time, he states correctly the facts of the case. Yahweh did not divorce Israel out of capriciousness but for good reason - her sins. Waldow says that Yahweh's questions remain unanswered; the accuser is crushed by the questions to silence. By a series of questions from the defendant, the plaintiff is reduced to silence, proving the innocence of the defendant. In Yahweh's case, it proves his sovereignty.[33]

Covenant theology gave the lawsuit its theological content. George Mendenhall says that there are two main types of covenant - the suzerainty and the parity. The suzerainty is the basic form in which the inferior party, or vassal, is bound by an oath to the stipulations of the sovereign. In the parity covenant both parties are bound to obey identical stipulations; the parties are considered equals.[34]

The stipulations of the suzerainty covenant were binding only on the vassal. He was the only one who took the oath of obedience. For the suzerain to bind himself to any stipulation would be considered an infringement upon his self-determination and sovereignty. Although it was taken for granted that the covenant relation would protect the vassal from any capricious attack by the suzerain, the vassal's obligation was to trust in the benevolence of the sovereign.[35] The covenant designated a form of compatible relationship between two

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[33]Waldow, pp. 42-43.

[34]Mendenhall, p. 30.   [35]Mendenhall, p. 30.

partners. The goal of the covenant was the establishment of a shalom

(wholeness) relationship between the two partners.[36]

In Israel the suzerainty pattern was used to describe the

people's shalom relationship to Yahweh. They were bound to obedience

of the stipulations imposed by Yahweh.[37] In fulfilling the stipulations

the shalom relationship was kept intact.

Mendenhall gives the following outline of the suzerainty

covenant:[38]

1. Preamble: identifies author of covenant.

2. Historical prologue: describes the previous relation between
   the two parties emphasizing the benevolent deeds of the suzerain.

3. Stipulations: the obligations imposed upon and accepted by the.

4. Provision for deposit in the temple and periodic public reading.

5. The list of gods as witnesses to the covenant.

6. The curses and blessing formula: the list of results of acts
   of disobedience by the vassal.

7. The formal oath whereby the vassal pledges his obedience.

When the covenant is broken, the very structure of the natural order is

called upon to guarantee the treaty. In Israel, as we discussed

earlier, the natural elements witness to the covenant and are called

in when the curses become operative.[39] When the covenant is broken, a

controversy between Israel and Yahweh has begun. The "lawsuit" was

the indictment of the controversy. Wright traces this development of

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[36]Waldow, p. 21. [37]Mendenhall, p. 37.

[38]Mendenhall, pp. 32-34. [39]Wright, "Lawsuit of God," p. 53.

the lawsuit in relation to the covenant.[40] He shows that the lawsuit is the form by which the breach of covenant is handled in Israel, and thus uses the term "covenant-lawsuit."

Waldow[41] points out that the motif of accusation and murmuring of the people was part of the history of Israel. The demand by the people upon God was connected with the wilderness wanderings, especially the Massah-Meribah tradition.[42] In the wilderness incident the people demanded wholly conclusive evidence - water - that Yahweh was present. "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7) In the realm of covenant relationship this reproach of Yahweh means breach of covenant.

That God is both judge and a party to the controversy is explained within a covenant structure. The God who would summon the curses and blessing - the divine authority who watched over the observance of the stipulations - was also a party to the covenant. He was the author of the covenant relationship. When the covenant was broken, he would be the damaged partner who would accuse Israel. But at the same time, he was also the judge who oversaw the carrying out of the punishment by the natural elements.[43] "The identity of accuser and judge now thus appear as a wholly self-evident part of the covenant theology."[44]

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[40]Wright, "Lawsuit of God," pp. 59-65.

[41]Waldow, pp. 33, 35.

[42]Translated proof and contention. (Exodus 17:7) R.S.V. note.

[43]Waldow, pp. 23-24.   [44]Waldow, p. 24.

Waldow points out[45] that, if the suzerainty form is the
analogy for the covenant relation between Israel and Yahweh, it is
a one-sided covenant relation. Only the sovereign had the right to
charge his covenant partner. "The reciprocal situation would be
unthinkable in this form of the covenant."[46] Thus, when the vassal
accuses the sovereign, he has changed covenant forms form the suze-
rainty to the parity. In doing so, he has promoted himself to the
same level as his sovereign. But such an action was a breach of cove-
nant against the covenant giver. Since Yahweh is the covenant
partner and judge, an accusation against him would mean that, as the
defendant, he would have to pass a judgement against himself, which
would be illogical. Yahweh has to make the accuser the accused, as
we have noted earlier. Thus, any judicial action by Israel against
Yahweh would be conceived not only as breaking the covenant relation
but also would be conceived as juristic suicide.[47]

In Jeremiah 44, probably either Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, or
the Deuteronomic Redactor (hereafter written as DtR) adapted a group
of separate prophetic judgements by Jeremiah and put them within the
framework of the covenant lawsuit. In this form the oracles communi-
cate a trial scene with Yahweh as plaintiff and judge. This form
especially expresses the judgement of DtR.

Jeremiah 44 is filled with expressions of Deuteronomic in-
fluence - the exaggerated destruction of Judah, the repeated warning

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[45]Waldow, pp. 36-37.

[46]Waldow, p. 37.   [47]Waldow, p. 37.

of the prophets, the condemnation of disobedience and false worship.
Based on the theology of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic historian,
DtR took up the challenge of the theological crisis resulting from
the Exile. His task was "to defend Yahweh against the charges of
neglect, powerlessness or unfairness."[48] DtR used the clash between
Jeremiah and the group which fled to Egypt to answer the questions:
was Yahweh Israel's God and a just God?

For DtR Yahweh's sovereignty could not be challenged.
Yahweh was the agent of Judah's destruction, but Israel was the cause.
Even though Yahweh continually gave Israel opportunities to repent,
the people refused to listen and change their ways. The people were
not deaf to the word of the prophets, which leads to life; rather,
they continually chose to break the covenant. Even after the des-
truction of Jerusalem, a new beginning was possible if the people had
remained in the land (Jeremiah 42:10-12). The remnant rejected the
offer and fled to Egypt. In Egypt they could have survived, but they
were as evil as their fathers;[49] they chose a covenant with the Queen
of Heaven instead. They declared their guilt.

For both Jeremiah and DtR breaking the covenant stipulations
was not just breaking a rule; rather, it violated the very core of
Israel's existence. This break of the covenant and its resulting
consequences had their heritage in the Sinai-Decalogue Tradition.

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[48]Ralph W. Klein, Israel in Exile (Philadelphia: Fortress
Press, 1979), p. 57.

[49]Klein, pp. 57-60.

Jeremiah warns the people against serving other gods, against cultic practices that destroy their covenant with Yahweh. These refugees have specifically violated the first and second commands of the Decalogue given at Sinai. The terminology used to describe the laws, statutes and testimonies (44:23) harkens back to the covenant theophany of the Sinai tradition.

In the Sinai theophany Yahweh, who has liberated the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, encounters the people in an awesome natural display of power. Upon the mountain Yahweh elects this band of Hebrews and asserts his sovereignty as God of Israel. In a covenant analogous to the Hittite suzerainty-vassal treaty the people accept their relationship as vassal to his sovereign rule.[50]

Their sovereign ruler must govern. In the Sinai tradition, Israel has received the basic regulations for her life before and with Yahweh.[51] Every sphere is encompassed by Yahweh's sovereign canopy to keep life human for the people. In the Decalogue the one who had liberated them kept them free, kept them from falling into bondage again.

In the Decalogue Yahweh places before the people a choice. Living under Yahweh's rule meant life, prosperity and blessing. Upon hearing the command the people had to choose between life and death (Deuteronomy 30:1-20). From a Yahwistic perspective there was no life

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[50]Walter Beyerlin, _Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions_ (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 145-146.

[51]Rad, 1:190.

outside of Yahweh's governance.

The Decalogue structured a viable social order to keep humans human. It structured the people's relationship with Yahweh and was the basis for cultic relationship with Yahweh. It structured social relationships and the life of the community. In modern terms, the social, political, economic and psychic realms were structured by the relationship with Yahweh.

The first, second and third commandments of the Decalogue cite the principal sins the band of refugees in Egypt commit. The first command presupposes the existence of other gods. Yahwism never denies other gods;[52] it asserts exclusive allegiance to Yahweh. A god was expected to produce concrete assistance and benefits for the worshipper. As far as the people were concerned, their worship was effective if assistance and benefits occurred.[53] The categorical injunctions to have no other gods beside Yahweh was not a matter of intellectual assent; it was a matter of trust and obedience which claimed one's volition. Yahweh would not tolerate any opposing power beside Him for people to choose between.[54]

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[52]Walter Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1978), pp. 42-43, 116-117.

[53]Thomas W. Overholt, The Threat of Falsehood (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1970), pp. 10-11.

[54]Johann J. Stamm and Maurice L. Andrew, The Ten Commandments in Recent Research (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 80-81.

This exclusiveness is carried over into the second command concerning graven images. In the Ancient Near East images were the means whereby the deity became present.[55] The image was not god; rather, the deity took possession of the image. The divine power animated the image by dwelling in it. The image was the medium of the power it represented. These cultic images and symbols were helpful in approaching a power. The presence and power of the deity could be made effective and bestow the blessing and benefits of that god upon humanity. In the image the deity communicated with the worshipper.

As noted earlier, in the myths of the Ancient Near East the gods personified the natural powers. Cultic rites and images were a way of regulating and manipulating these powers for human benefit. Without the gods and their images humans in the world would be lost. The immanence of cosmic powers was not the mode of Yahweh's relating to the world.[56] The world was not the outward shape of God.

In the prohibition of images the boundary line between Yahweh and the world was drawn more sharply than in other Ancient Near Eastern religions.[57] Yahweh was the creator and sustainer of the world and not one of its created forces or natural powers. The rejection of images meant that, whenever the encounter with God becomes

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[55]Zimmerli, p. 120; Rad, 1:213-218; Stamm and Andrew, pp. 82,88.

[56]Rad, 2:218.

[57]Stamm and Andrew, pp. 88-89.

identical with a representation of one of the created forces of the world (natural powers) or with some "higher" authority, humans exclude God from the relationship. Yahweh is not at the disposal of human control; Yahweh's freedom and transcendence does not entrap Him in a cultic act of sympathetic magic. "It is just in this world without images of any kind that man is most likely to meet God, because, without these, he is truly open to God in what he is, where he is."[58]

The last oracle (Jeremiah 44:24-28) concerns the oath the people have made to the Queen of Heaven. They vowed to maintain the rituals of the Queen of Heaven. Evidently they were also using a Yahwistic phrase, "As the Lord God lives," in their cultic oath. In the ancient world oaths constituted an integral means of securing society, undergirding both the cultic and legal procedures. The oath or vow impressed upon people the obligation of parties to an agreement.[59]

The Third Commandment prohibited the invoking of Yahweh's name for evil or false intent. The people could not serve two gods. When the people adapted Yahweh to the Queen of Heaven cult, they were using Yahweh's name in vain.

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[58]Stamm and Andrew, p. 80.

[59]James L. Crenshaw, Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice (Missoula, MR: Scholar's Press, 1975), p. 100. Marvin H. Pope, "Oaths," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:575-77.

In Jeremiah 44 the people have provoked Yahweh's anger and He has set His face against them because they have chosen another god. While Jeremiah attributes the destruction of Judah to Yahweh, these refugees have a very different view of the course of events. They attribute the curse of the fall of Judah which Jeremiah describes to their faithlessness to the divine lady.

Probably they were recalling the time of Manasseh. II Kings 21:3 reports Manasseh's erection of altars to Asherah, one of the names for the Queen of Heaven.[60] Even though he is condemned for this practice, his reign was long and peaceful. He submitted to the Assyrians, paid his tribute, ended the wars of independence by small nations and the military retaliation of the Assyrian king.[61]

Josiah's reformation of cultic practices destroyed the altars and images created by his grandfather Manasseh, centralizing the cult in Jerusalem. While hailed as a great reformer of Yahwism by the Deuteronomic historian, the refugees in Egypt saw this as the real source of their problem and downfall of Jerusalem. Who could deny the evidence? "As long as they were faithful to the goddess Asherah, the queen of heaven, all went well, but when they abandoned their goddess, she forsook them and calamity followed disaster."[62]

Now one comes to the crux of this message. Two mutually exclusive gods, two different belief systems, two different faiths

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[60]James P. Hyatt, "The Book of Jeremiah," in Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 5:873-874, 1099.

[61]Freedman, p. 35.   [62]Freedman, p. 35.

collide with each other. On the one hand we have the Ancient Near
Eastern fertility cults with their battle of the gods and which
work to provide prosperity and benefit for the people in their re-
curring cycles of seasonal vegetation and cultic imagery. These same
practices had been used by Judeans in the past and worked. On the
other hand, there is Yahwism with its exclusive obedience, promising
blessing if the people can be obedient, to which there is some
question now.

How were the people to choose between different interpretations
of historical events? Both positions appealed to the data of history
as evidence. Which theological position best accounted for the data?
Their predicament in the face of theological crisis stated earlier
cannot be underplayed. Their world had fallen apart; what had gone
wrong? What do they do to rebuild? Which god, with its ritual
practices, would secure the promised blessing? Which god would be
trustworthy? Which god would be just? Which god would deliver the
goods - prosperity and blessing?

Form critical study has led to a trial scene in which Yahweh,
through the prophet, has brought an accusation against the Jews in
Egypt. They have broken the covenant by violating the first three
statutes of the Decalogue. The first accusation is an appeal: the
people witnessed the past events of the fathers. Yahweh adds a
second accusation for present violation of the covenant. As though
wanting to know why they are worshipping other gods, Yahweh appeals
for them to change their cultic activity. The second accusation
adds weight to the first. Also stated as an appeal-accusation, Yahweh

is, in effect, saying "let us settle this out of court," before the
sentence is given.

Normally one would expect the people to plead on the grounds
of innocence by their righteousness (like Job), the accuser being
wrong and, therefore, appealing to the judge for a just decision.
However, when the accused speak before the legal assembly, they
declare themselves innocent by offering another interpretation of
the events. Their counter-attack accuses Yahweh. In reacting to the
theological crisis of the Exile, they assert Yahweh to be no god, or
only one god among many to be appeased. Yahweh has violated one of
their basic theological tenets; He has not acted with blessing,
benevolence and prosperity toward the people who worship Him. There-
fore, they have entered into covenant with the Queen of Heaven, who
is faithful and trustworthy. (They still use the name of Yahweh.)
(44:26b)

Then Yahweh, who was plaintiff, becomes the judge, pronouncing
the indictment of guilt. The poeple have declared the covenant to
be broken. They are guilty. Using a more individual prophetic
judgement speech, Yahweh pronounces sentence. The people are read
out of the covenant, i.e., out of existence. They are as good as
dead. The focus of this passage looms before the reader. The people
shall know whose word stands, whose word is true, and a sign is given
to them to confirm this word.

Chapter IV

SOME THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF PROPHETIC YAHWISM

In order to understand the magnitude of the people's choice
and the meaning of Jeremiah's announcement of judgement, we need to
clarify some of the theological underpinnings of prophetic Yahwism
and the theological assumptions upon which Jeremiah 44 rests. We
need also to determine the distinctiveness of Biblical Yahwism and
how Jeremiah and DtR represent it. In order to do this, the inter-
relation of Israel's theological traditions needs to be explored.

The first of the foundations concerns why Yahweh brings
judgement. Why are the commandments important? Why does their
Sovereign rule the way He does? What criteria does Yahweh use to
act in History? What are the criteria the people are using to make
their choices? What criteria is Jeremiah using? What is the con-
nection between judgement and devastation and worship and prosperity,
or blessing?

Until recently, Old Testament theology has held that the
traditions of the God who acts in history to bring judgement upon
the people and nations were mutually exclusive from the traditions
of the God of creation and blessing. These traditions eventually
merged late in Israel's development. Rolf Knierim, in his article
"Cosmos and History in Israel's Theology,"[1] has demonstrated the

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[1] Rolf Knierim, "Cosmos and History in Israel's Theology,"
Horizons in Biblical Theology, 3 (1981), 59-123.

systematic priority of a theology of creation and the interconnection
between God's activity and presence in creation and the events of
history.

Unlike her neighbors, Israel did not divinize the powers,
forces or order of creation. Nor did she deify her institutions and
make them sacrosanct. Yahweh, as creator of the world, was not
identified with anything in the world. By being other than the cosmos,
Yahweh was the ultimate horizon of reality. Yahweh's action in
history, Knierim concludes, was always within the scope of the world
order Yahweh had created.[2] In biblical Yahwism,[3] because Yahweh was
creator, the world order was established and could be trusted.
Because the character of Yahweh's role was goodness, wisdom, glory,
justice and righteousness, the world order had these qualities.
Because of Yahweh's presence, the world order was not chaotic. "In
the intactness of the world order, Yahweh was experienced as
cosmically present in everyday reality."[4]

In the biblical view the foundational criteria whereby
Yahweh created the world and established the world order were justice
and righteousness. Therefore, the meaning and purpose of history

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[2]Knierim, p. 97.

[3]A distinction needs to be maintained between the popular
Yahwism of Israel and the canonical Yahwism handed down in the Bible.
Biblical Yahwism (or Israel's Yahwism, to use Knierim's terminology)
was often in the minority and presented a different interpretation
from the popular Yahwism of the day. Jeremiah 44, as well as Jere-
miah's struggle with the false prophets, demonstrates this distinction.

[4]Knierim, p. 88.

whereby the historical creations of humans were judged was the
justice and righteousness of Yahweh. "He is the God who loves
history as justice and righteousness instead of as power and might,
because He is the creator whose love for justice and righteousness
is the basis for the initial and ongoing order of the world."[5]

In the Ancient Near Eastern mythologies the gods were to
maintain the order of their cosmic realm. The high god was the
arbiter of power. In the Canaanite material, El judges and orders
these powers by necessity or affection. The hierarchical order of
the gods has the potential of re-arrangement or chaos. Unlike
Canaanite El, Yahweh as judge does not choose between various powers
and forces. He uses them as instruments of His judgement or sal-
vation, i.e., the establishment or re-establishment of justice. The
powers of creation are there for blessing and not chaos.

As Psalm 33 indicates, the justice and righteousness of
Yahweh are the principles by which history and nations are governed.
"History falls or is justified to the extent that it is in step with
the just and righteous order of creation."[6]

In the salvation traditions, Yahweh is actively involved in
the historical events of nations and his people. In the Exodus,
Yahweh's salvic event liberated the people from bondage and oppression.
In the creation tradition, Yahweh liberates creation from chaos. The
ultimate power Israel engaged was "the liberating creator of Israel

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[5]Knierim, p. 97.   [6]Knierim, p. 97.

precisely because he is the liberating creator of the world."[7]

Israel's vocation was twofold. First, Israel was to witness to God's liberation of the world into the just world order of His creation. Secondly, in her institutions, leadership and daily life in the land, Israel was to actualize this purpose of Yahweh. Israel's social justice and righteousness is to be in accord with Yahweh's justice and righteousness, the foundation of cosmic and world government.[8] Israel's institutions were for the distribution of Yahweh's justice. In Israel's society "justice is an order that enables all to live peaceful relationships."[9] Justice is a social, political and economic ethos.

This brings us to our next theological foundation, prophetic judgement. Israel's theological tradition highlighted the ongoing struggle, crises and tensions between the meaning of her history and her actualization. Although biblical Yahwism struggled to keep Israel's institutions from becoming mythologized, Israel continually became like her neighbors. Israel's own cultic institutions, rulers and history replaced or substituted their own order of creation for Yahweh's just world order. In her actual history Israel gave mythological legitimization to her hierarchical social orders. She justified the status quo and resisted distribution of justice for all.

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[7]Knierim, p. 98.   [8]Knierim, p. 100.

[9]Rolf Knierim, "The Biblical Concept of Justice" (Address given at South Pacific District Convention of American Lutheran Church, Sacramento, CA, May 31, 1979), p. 17.

When Israel's institutions became an end in themselves and not the means of Yahweh's just world order, the prophets arose to announce Yahweh's judgement.

The Lord of the world and Judge of history judged the implementation of Israel's actualization of justice. The people were not the judge of how their mission had been carried out. The history of prophetic judgement declared when Israel turned away from Yahweh and its vocation. Israel lost the foundation of its existence. The pending destruction announced by the prophet was Yahweh's own intervention to turn Israel.[10] Yahweh's action as punishment was His attempt to restore the people to His just order.

Jeremiah 44 stands within a long history of prophetic theology of judgement. A very distorted picture of the deity evolves if God's judgement is seen as punitive action. As Knierim has shown,[11] the theology of salvation and judgement are rooted in a theology of a just world order whereby Yahweh creates and sustains history and creation. A theology of judgement tacitly assumes a theology of creation, blessing and salvation to undergird Yahweh's loving kindness towards His people.

Without these tacit assumptions, a theology of judgement turns into a narrow, hostile and paranoid view of life. Without a theology of blessing and creation, the deity turns into a psychotic

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[10] Claus Westermann, Elements of Old Testament Theology (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 126,127.

[11] Knierim, "The Biblical Concept of Justice," p. 19.

tyrant. Without a theology of salvation the deity throws a moral temper tantrum with history. It produces a tribal self-righteousness whose deity is the tribal avenger. The people's election and special-ness produces a righteousness of moral justification. Yahweh as a just creator provides the universal horizon in which the events of history are discerned as his corrective measures to re-establish justice when the order has collapsed.

The third theological assumption concerns worship as the setting wherein justice is acknowledged, celebrated and experienced. Worship was to mediate justice for the world rather than be the expiation of powers. Its center was the experience of the gift of Yahweh's justice and the proclamation of that justice for the world and for Israel.[12]

The prophetic judgement against worship arose when the worship of Yahweh was no longer genuine. Polluted by the fertility cults, worship was no longer the place where the living God encountered His people.[13] Worship no longer proclaimed Yahweh's justice or protested its perversion. It had "become a self-perpetuating religious machinery which ultimately functioned as a defense mechanism against Yahweh's expectation of justice."[14]

The first three commandments accentuate the cleavage between Yahweh and the world. Nothing in the world can compare to Yahweh. His

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[12]Knierim, "The Biblical Concept of Justice," pp. 17-18.

[13]Westermann, Elements of Old Testament Theology, pp. 132-133.

[14]Knierim, "The Biblical Concept of Justice," p. 20.

identity is not bound to any form, cultural expression, institution, power or force of creation. Yahweh's ctherness provides a fulcrum by which to judge the events and institutions of Israel and other nations. Yahweh is also present and active in His creation.

Creation was structured according to Yahweh's just world order. Yahweh's judgement through the prophets was based on that justice. It called into question human creations and institutions when they exalted their own particular power and cohesion above Yahweh's justice and order for all to live in peaceful, whole relationships.

By affirming Yahweh as sovereign rather than the Queen of Heaven, the world views of Jeremiah and DtR hold to a just world order, in contrast to impersonal powers of creation. In the trial scene DtR establishes that Yahweh is a just God because He still executes justice. For Jeremiah, blessing and prosperity are the consequences of actualizing an order of justice.

The refugees were trying to manipulate blessing and fertility for their own benefit. Through a religion of sympathetic magic and the use of images and names, they tried to control the powers of their economy. Jeremiah, on the other hand, called the people to be faithful to Yahweh and his just order. The consequence of that faithfulness would be blessing.

Jeremiah and DtR stood in a tradition that spoke not only of judgement but also of salvation. Jeremiah's judgements not only called the people to turn to Yahweh again, but elsewhere he speaks of those

exiled from Jerusalem as having a future in the land of their exile. (Jeremiah 29) DtR goes on to affirm that, as Yahweh keeps His word of judgement, He also keeps His salvic intention to restore justice. A new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) will be made, bringing a new relationship to actualize Yahweh's justice and a new future for Israel.[15]

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[15]Klein, pp. 62-66.

Chapter V

A VERNACULAR THEOLOGY: DISCERNING THE MEANING OF THE CRISIS

This project began by noting our current historical crisis,
primarily as expressed in economic terms. Then it traced the Ancient
Near East's understanding of the gods and the conflict which Yahwism
had with it. Now we turn to the confluence of the tradition and
contemporary events and their meaning for today.

A vernacular theology, biblically informed and using an
economic hermeneutic, needs to understand the correlation of the gods,
the myths, rituals, offices and architecture of Israel's surrounding
culture as analogous to our cultural expression of the struggle with
the primary powers, purpose, actions institutions and buildings. The
cults of the Ancient Near East, with their myths and rituals, were the
means - the symbols, meanings and ritual behavior - by which the society
held itself together, understood the meaning of survival and enabled
the powers of the cosmos and society to be beneficial. When these myths
are demythologized, they describe the interrelationship of the economic,
political, defensive and bureaucratic powers - how they functioned and
could be supported for human benefit.

In the ancient world, as was stated earlier, the temple, with
its gods and attendant mythology, was the architectural symbol of the
ultimate concerns, powers, forces of the world. It was the place of
divine presence, the earthly counterpart to godly reality, the point
of contact between the gods and the earth. "The building of the temple

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was the climax of the act of sovereignty."[1] In today's society the architectural centers representing our world and world view are located in the primary institutions which are economic, political and military in nature. Our corresponding temples are our civic centers, shopping centers, capitols, manufacturing centers, military bases, business districts, banks or financial districts.

The gods in the ancient world were the personified powers and forces of nature and society. Today we give them other names and combine the powers differently; however, a rough correlation may be helpful.[2]

Ancient Deity	Powers	Contemporary Name
EL	Law and order	Rule
Baal	Cause and effect	Process
Hadad	War and combat	Defense
Ashtart-Ishtar	Vitality and fertility	Productivity (GNP)
Mot	Despair, meaninglessness, non-existence, sterility, death	Death
Marduk	Storm and drought	Weather
Anu	Stratosphere and outer space	Cosmos
Tiamat	Tides and the Deep	Sea

In the ancient world, many gods personified two or three powers or functions. At times we find Baal to be storm god; at other times he

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[1] John L. McKenzie, A Theology of the Old Testament (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), p. 52.

[2] Much of the following is based on conversations with clergy colleague Josh L Wilson, Jr.

is the god of war and combat or the cause and effect of fertility.
The ancient interrelation of powers and functions corresponds to the
interrelation of economic, political and military powers as might be
seen in what we term "the military-industrial complex." The myths
described the interrelation of these powers and the cultic ritual
maintained a correct relationship for the powers to be beneficial.
While the names of the powers have changed and their character appears
in other forms, the human struggle is still with the powers and their
dominion or authority over us. In question is our ability to use them
for the welfare and benefit of humanity.

Just as ancient cultures erected a temple and cult to these
powers, so today our culture develops its temples, cults and priest-
hoods for its handling of the powers. The contemporary list of temples
and cults would be General Motors, General Electric, General Foods,
the Pentagon, the White House, Lockheed, Sacramento. The cultural
equivalents of the priesthood are the officials and high officials,
directors, managers, manipulators of power, authority and ultimate
concerns for our society. In our society the high priests and the
priests are not the Bill Grahams or local pastors; rather, they are the
Secretary of State, of Defense, the Rockefellers, state and city
officials and bureaucrats. The issue for a biblically informed
vernacular theology is to discern the conflict betwneen these powers
and authorities (gods) and bring a Yahwistic interpretation to them.
A vernacular theology would be to study the gods' conflict in light of
biblical meaning.

The way these powers and authorities function in contemporary
conflict-myth-ritual patterns can be seen in any newspsper, magazine,
and TV or radio news report. For example, Howard Smith's comments
which were cited in Chapter I regarding President Carter and the
economy reflect the ancient motif that the president (king) is the
gardener, responsible for the fertility (the economic well-being) of
the nation and now of the entire world, the world economy being
dependent upon the U.S. economy. If the President can conjoin with
the powers of Baal and Ashtar, i.e., the economic powers in all their
complexity, if he car. seduce business and labor to join his economic
plan, if he can hold back and control the chaos of inflation and
recession, if he can rejuvenate the spirit of productivity in the
American worker, if he can keep and till the "American Dream" garden,
if, through the cultic rituals of government action, he is able to
maintain the vitality, confidence and enthusiasm - that is, if he can
be fertile and bring the blessings of the economic gods - then he will
be judged to be successful.

The same is true with the leadership of any major business
corporation. Within days after the Nielsen ratings indicated a
decided preference for American Broadcasting Company over NBC and CBS,
in that order, the president of CBS, Arthur Taylor, was replaced.[3]
Taylor, a financial whiz, seemed to lack the necessary skills in
programming, rating, personnel management and handling of government

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[3]Harry F. Walters, "The Harder They Fall," Newsweek, 88:17
(October 25, 1976), 62.

interference. Financially he had produced profits by holding down salaries and expenses, but, in the process, CBS lost valuable creative personnel. In relation to the government, Taylor accepted the FCC ruling on a "family viewing hour," and almost singlehandedly convinced other networks to write the concept into the National Association of Broadcasters code. The family viewing hour helped ABC leapfrog over CBS in the prime-time ratings. The clash between William Paley, CBS patriarch and decision-maker, and Taylor, heir-apparent, took place 90 minutes before the board meeting in which Taylor resigned. Even though the board unanimously approved, Wall Street did not, and the company stock fell $3.88 per share in two days following Taylor's replacement.[4] John Backe, formerly the head of CBS's small publishing company, took over. "The betting on Wall Street is that Backe accepted the presidency of CBS only if Paley would give him the chief-executive position as well."[5]

This incident is an example of many one can read in news or business magazines about the struggle for corporation power and leadership. The incident seems to describe what the mythological motifs are attempting to express. The powers of economic life must be stringently maintained. Chaos raises its head this time in the form of TV ratings, and the patriarchal powers destroy their own offspring. The issue at CBS was dominion over the TV industry. The

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[4]Michael Ruby, CBS Plays Executive Suite," _Newsweek_, 88:17 (October 25, 1976), 83.

[5]Ruby, p. 86.

powers which blessed and granted fertility to CBS were now granted to
ABC; those same powers may also be withdrawn. Is it any wonder that
the Ancients described the Queen of Heaven both as a lover (fertile)
and a bloody destroyer? The number of executives or other employees
who yearly fall under the savage power of economic battles, be they
Presidents or the unemployable on welfare, represents the economic
battle of our time. The problem of leadership for Taylor seems to be
that he was not able to maintain his power against the forces within
and without. The intrigue sounds like the jockeying for position of
Adonijah and Solomon following David's demise.

The fertility cults, especially, functioned as the mechanism
for the economic powers of these ancient societies. They were the
bureaucracies and institutions established to manage the "scarce
productive resources which could have alternative uses, to produce
various commodities and distribute them for consumption, now or in
the future, among various people and groups in society."[6] The economy
of an agricultural society depends upon the maintenance and increase of
harvests, herds, children, in order for society to prosper and trade
to expand.

If we set the Ancient Near Eastern culture with its myths,
rituals, institutions and architecture in juxtaposition to our own
20th century American culture, some analogies stand out.

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[6]Paul A. Samuelson, _Economics_ (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970),
p. 13.

First of all, the religion of our society - that is, its ultimate concern, the institutionalization of powers and authorities - is not expressed in churches, synagogues and sects; rather, religion, as in the Ancient Near East, is found in the meanings, values and institutions with the power to order our domestic tranquility and promote the general welfare and secure blessings. Religion is impersonal, objective, demanding conformity, preserving and conserving. In Latin, religio means to tie back, to bind. It is the conserving force and preserving function of society. The centers of religion, i.e., the temples, are the centers of our cities, states and nation, the capitols, the financial districts, the defense plants, shopping centers. The priesthood of the temple religion is made up of all those who work in the bureaucracy of the business, defense and government structures of our society. They are the mediators, managers, manipulators of power, authority and ultimate concern. The high priests are the officials, the top management of these bureaucracies. The princes are the chiefs of the political, economic and defense powers, i.e., the presidents of large corporations, the generals and admirals of the military-industrial complex. The King is represented by the president, congress, supreme court of the United States, prime ministers, chairmen, premiers, governors.

Religion, as the tieing back or ordering of a raw chaotic power, standardizes, packages that power into ritual actions, universalizes it, and markets it for its members. Religion is the values, purposes enacted by the power elite of a society which forms a unity

by an intermingling council of priests, princes, chiefs and kings seated in the political, military and economic institutions.[7]

The folk religion of supportive secondary structures are the schools which are state institutions designed to impress upon every psyche the religious way of life - i.e., the American way of life. The family is the state productive unit of human beings, and the syncretized church, be it Protestant, Catholic, Masons, fraternal clubs and service organizations or civic and cultural groups, exists as an innocuous shrine for ritualized fellowship and public gathering.

Furthermore, the architectural similarities stand out as the archetypal symbols are used even today. As in the ancient world, where the temple housed the deity, today a particular power is housed in its modern high rise office building. People have access to the power only through its priests. They approach it in holy awe. The towering temples usually feature fountains (the water of life), gardens and evergreen trees, and are constructed in order for a person to progress from one level of power to another, with the president in a secluded office unreachable by the common person. There is the courtyard and outer office areas, the general work areas of middle management, and then the top management's holy-of-holies. Trying to get through the bureaucratic maze becomes a feat of power. When one is not a "power peer" and enters either the inner office or the solemnity of a grand occasion, one experiences the mysterious and the

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[7]C. Wright Mills, "The Structure of Power in American Society," in Irving L. Horowitz (ed.), Power, Politics and People (New York: Ballantine Books, 1963), p. 27.

tremendous. Notice, for example, the construction of a court room,
the outer room for all those waiting, the main room for the specific
cases to be called, and the adyton, the area behind the railing, into
which one enters with the judge for judgement.

In a business, as in the temple, the access to the power,
"the gate of the god," is ritualized and highly structured with rites
of purification and appropriate action. Making appointments, getting
past the secretary, entering the room, having ones plans duly organized
and laid out, making the appropriate offerings, attending the holy
banquet of a business luncheon, signing the contract or appropriate
business agreement, sending purchase orders, etc. - all of these steps
are rituals which corporations establish in order for the product to
get to the consumer. If the ritual miscarries at any stage of the
procedure, it becomes an impure offering to the god of economy and
becomes a headache for someone to straighten out. The rituals and
sacrifices of the temples functioned as the rites for access to the
benevolence of the deity. Today, the holy "red tape" one has to go
through in a business corporation functions as the rite of access to
the profit of a business.

Thus far we have attempted to show a correlation between the
Ancient Near Eastern religions - mythology (theology) and rituals - and
the contemporary forms of religion and its temples. Added support comes
from Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy in their book, <u>Corporate</u>

Cultures.[8] They suggest that every business and organization has a culture - a way of doing things. A strong and productive business, over the long haul, has a strong culture. The business managers or leaders mythologize the values of their culture, recount legends about its heroes and establish rites, rituals and procedures as to how things get done in the organization. Using the language of business management, they describe how a group of people create a religion, mythologize and legitimatize their economic power. But the reader may ask, how does all this help modern persons to understand the contemporary historical crisis which is dominated by the crisis of economics?

From a Yahwistic perspective, every historical crisis, whatever its manifestations and signs, expresses the judgement of Yahweh and the call to actualize the gift of justice and world order. In the current economic disruption, the tendency is to create prosperity by the manipulation of economic forces for the benefit of an elite population at the expense of a just economic order for all. Biblically, we have seen that God's action liberates and restores justice. Yahweh's liberating activity is the crisis of a new order breaking in upon the old order. Yahweh challenges us to leave the world view and mythology of creation's powers and human structures and to cross over into a new society of economic justice and human solidarity. In other words, the crisis is produced in the conflict

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[8]Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy, Corporate Cultures (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982).

between our efforts to religionize the powers and faith as an act of decisive response-ability and solidarity.

While the conserving function of religion is important, it can become pretentious, brittle, authoritarian, tyrannical and totalitarian. Faith stands over against the pretentiousness and authoritarianism of the power of religion to remind us that these are the creations of humankind. The structures of religion must be broken and deserted when they enslave, imprison, crush or destroy human beings. On the other hand, they are to be supported when they extend the general welfare and order of an ever-growing order of human-kind. Faith is the decisive relationship of response-ability. Faith is being poised and aware of the meaning inherent in every situation; it is the vigorous pursuit to unscramble the meaning of events and the act of decision-making which will affect the outcome. To state it another way: faith is the awareness that God has acted already in the historical situation we are part of, to make it whole (shalom) in relationship to Himself. He opens it to existential discovery and the decision for humans to claim it in solidarity with fellow humans.

Just as religion is a closing and conserving force, faith is opening, the open response to reality which is crashing in upon us. Religion views the activity of God as crisis; faith perceives it to be a challenge. Religion orders chaos by trying to establish a static security in the repetition of life experiences. Faith is creative and redemptive; life is delivered unique in every historical event. Faith sees a before and after, an old age and new age. Religion views only

the cycles to be repeated. Religion establishes external controls
and produces collectivities which masquerade as community and in which
the individuation of the self is annihilated. Faith establishes in-
ternal controls, unlocks resources in personal relationship, celebrating
the gift of community. Religion wraps itself in rituals, cultic
activity, to manage conflicting powers. Faith opens itself to encounter
the Power who meets each one in the events of conflict.

From a Yahwistic interpretation the crisis is not a battle of
the gods, i.e., power conflict. The conflict is between Yahweh and
humanity. Humans give their allegiance and commitment over and over
again to authorities, powers and institutions that are not Yahweh. In
our attempt to manipulate the powers, we grant them authority over our
lives. For the people in Egypt the conflict was between the gods. For
Jeremiah and DtR Yahweh was taking the people to court. Whenever the
god is not Yahweh, we inevitably entrap and snare ourselves in our own
bondage to powers and authorities we create. To choose covenant with
Yahweh means being diligent that Yahweh is the only power we serve,
i.e., to point towards and actualize justice and world order.

In today's society graven images are not figurines. They are
coins, paper money printed to cover government excessive spending. They
are paper sales of real estate, inflating land beyond its worth. The
ritual libations are supply side economics continuing to be practiced
when a global economy calls for productive side.

To put it another way, is the conflict between East and West,
United States and Russia, a conflict between the "super powers" who are

protesting and asserting their power and dominion over the world?
Or, is Yahweh confronting the Americans and Soviets in this economic
crisis to act decisively and in solidarity with all of humanity to
respond to his call for global economic justice?

Religion and faith happen everywhere, not just in churches.
A business corporation is both religious and faithful. Some economic
institutions are more religious, that is, more conserving and brittle,
than others. It is amusing when someone from the military, civil
service or working middle management of Kaiser industries says, "I
am not a religious man." Usually he is a most religious man but not
a person of faith. Peter Drucker, in his book Management, describes
managerial organizations or businesses as religious and innovative
organizations as of the faith.[9]

From the time of David, the Royal theology adapted features
of the Canaanite, Mesopotamian and even elements of Egyptian culture
and mythologies to describe the new state of affairs that the monarchy
brought to Israel. The New Years Festival became part of the Jerusalem
cult, as the Enthronement Psalms reflect, and wisdom became Yahweh's
consort. But, even as these other cultural elements, especially
Canaanite, were accepted, they were reinterpreted, and Yahwism came
into direct conflict with the Baalistic cults. As noted earlier, the
clash between Elijah and the priest of Baal on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18)
occurred within the setting of an economic crisis in the land, in the

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[9]Peter F. Drucker, Management (New York: Harper & Row, 1974),
pp. 518-528, 782-803.

form of a severe famine. The confrontation leads up to the contest between the priests at the altar of Baal and Elijah at Yahweh's altar. This is not a clash of two different sects or political parties; rahter, it was a question of how the people were to interpret the economic crisis of their day. Had Mot won the battle with Baal, or was the drought Yahweh's judgement upon the people?

In order to evoke the fertility of Baal, the Baalists performed the correct rituals, sacrificing the bull, limp dancing around the altar, crying loudly. Elijah also has his rituals, but he pictures the issue differently. For him the purpose of the test was to determine who is God (I Kings 18:24). Are the economic powers and authorities (Baal) truly god or is Yahweh? Elijah's question to the people is, "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21) Today the question is put: is the economy - productivity - the source of energy and power? Do we rely upon technology and the business world to come up with another form of energy to save us from this crisis? Or is Yahweh the source of energy and salvation?

Usually the interpretation given of such a passage sees the conflict between the institutions representing the biblical faith and the culture. For instance, Davie Napier raises the question, "Is it possible that the presence of the flag of the United States of America in the sanctuary of the church signifies the coalescence of Yahweh and

Baal, of Christ and culture?"[10] He says that the tendency toward the coalescence of Yahweh and Baal, which can be observed in any church in this country, leaves us confused as to the extent to which the "Word of God has been twisted, tortured and adulterated by its possible innocent and unconscious fusion with the world of decent, respectable, prosperous, white, capitalistic, North American woman or man."[11] At one level of the institutional churchly life we would agree with his interpretation. But to interpret the conflict only as one represented by flags in church sanctuaries or by one sub-culture with the established culture is to miss the other levels of interpretation. In a business corporation the issue is also between Yahweh and Baal. In fact, in Elijah's time the issue was explicitly one of a theology of economics. Who is in charge of the powers of fertility, productivity, business and corporate power? This is the level at which most laypersons experience the conflict between Baal and Yahweh, between religion and faith, between managerial business and innovative business.

Jeremiah 44 makes the conflict even clearer. When Jeremiah summons the people to stop serving the Queen of Heaven, he is calling their economic theory into question. The people declare, very pragmatically, that they will not listen to the word of Yahweh, but will continue in their practices to induce economic prosperity. When

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[10]Davie Napier, Word of God, Word of Earth (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976), p. 47. (his italics)

[11]Napier, pp. 45-49.

they and their fathers enacted the rituals to the Queen of Heaven,
"then we had plenty of food, and prospered and saw no evil." (Jeremiah
44:17) But, when they stopped the rituals, then they lacked every-
thing and were consumed by famine and the sword. Their rationale is
a hard-headed, business-like one; when they served the powers of
productivity and the economic interests, then the profits were high,
the stock market rose, inflation was under control, the GNP rose, and
interest rates and unemployment were down. But, when they served
Yahweh, the bottom fell out of the market, government regulations
strangled business, unemployment rose and the military was ill-
prepared to police the oil fields.

This seems to be more than just an ideological conflict, such
as between capitalism and socialism; it is more than a conflict between
church and state. Rather, it is a conflict over the very nature of
reality. Both capitalism and socialism are forms of religion which
demand our allegiance and obedience. According to each, if we serve
the gods of economy, be they capitalism or socialism, then we will
prosper. Here again, in the economic crisis of their day, Jeremiah
called the people to encounter the One sovereign power present in the
midst of the economic crisis. Rather than just managing the rituals of
administration and going down the tubes of history, the people were
called to obedience of Yahweh, to an act of decisive responsibility to
be present to their President of presidents. (Jeremiah 29:4-9)

The word of destruction, which Jeremiah declares, is obvious.
If a corporation refuses to innovate and establish a new market or

product, especially in a time of great change, then it will destroy itself and other companies will take over its market. An established company which is in an age demanding innovation and is not capable of so doing is doomed to decline and extinction.[12]

While Yahwism re-interpreted the myths of the Ancient Near East and the role of the king, they always put humans in a faith relationship with Yahweh rather than a religious - bureaucratic one. When Yahwism became religion, then the prophetic word called Israel to faith - to respond to the word of Yahweh which was heard amidst the economic and historical crises of the day. When we interpret the economic crisis of today, we perceive Yahweh beckoning the people out of narrow nationalistic economies of capitalism and socialism to expand horizons and discover or create economic justice for a global society. Just as capitalism and socialism broke the economic in-justice of feudalism, so today those who hear the Word are called to innovate, to bring economic shalom to a global society.

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[12]Drucker, p. 786.

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